

A Village Center Revitalization Strategy

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# ROSLINDALE SQUARE



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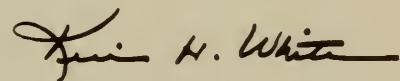
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# ROSLINDALE SQUARE

*"I have a vision of Boston –  
not only as the powerful  
economic and cultural hub  
of New England, but as a City  
whose strength is derived  
from the diversity and vitality  
of her neighborhoods."*



**City of Boston  
Kevin H. White, Mayor**

**Prepared by:  
Harrington, Keefe & Schork**

**In association with:  
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill**

**September 1979**

# Introduction



*The residents and businesspeople of Roslindale want the Square to be, in the future, what it has been for most of its past — the village center, the place where civic functions, shopping, services, cultural events, and the simple, day-to-day meeting of friends and neighbors all happen.*

*If more people can work in the Square, if it is easier for nearby residents to do errands and shop there, and if the Square becomes a more physically attractive place, the desirability of Roslindale as a community, and the confidence with which a homeowner can invest in it, will inevitably be enhanced.*

Planning is not new to Roslindale Square. This document, on the other hand, is not a typical plan. It is a strategy for enhancing the stability and vitality of the Square, sooner rather than later. This report attempts to do two things. It identifies a series of specific, practical improvements which appear to have community support and which should be started now. And it outlines more far-reaching development issues, on which community agreement may not yet exist but on which informed discussion of costs and benefits should also begin, now.

This document recommends specific actions by city and state agencies, local businesses, and neighborhood groups. Funding sources are identified, and in some cases funds are even committed. Tax incentives and public financing mechanisms to stimulate private investments are described.

But action--sustained, tangible action that pays off in better jobs and increased property values for the people of Roslindale--depends on two things: consensus and credibility. The people of Roslindale must reach agreement among themselves that certain improvements in the Square are desirable. And the public and private parties whose investment dollars will finance such improvements must select those which can happen quickly, and get them done. No one will believe anything is going to happen until something does.

Consensus on a series of specific public and private actions may not be easy to attain all at once. More achievable, perhaps, in the short run is an encompassing vision of what kind of place Roslindale Square ought to be. And that vision has already emerged quite clearly in the discussions which led to this report. The residents and businesspeople of Roslindale want the Square to be, in the future, what it has been for most of its past--the village center, the place where civic functions, shopping, services, cultural events, and the simple, day-to-day meeting of friends and neighbors all happen. For



decades, Roslindale Square contained a concentration of viable businesses, most of them small and local, that provided jobs for Roslindale residents and kept Roslindale dollars in the community. The common goal of every proposal in this Revitalization Strategy is to reinforce the Square as generations of people in the neighborhood have known it, to strengthen its familiar and distinguishing features, and to improve it where obvious improvements are necessary.

Roslindale Square has declined economically for the same reason that many other small city and town commercial centers have declined--the pervasive flight of busi-

nesses and dollars to shopping malls and plazas. But the pendulum is beginning to swing back to older business districts, and Federal and state development policies are being reshaped to favor them.

Most communities derive their image and identity from their centers. This is particularly true of Roslindale. In discussing Roslindale's political and social life, it is often observed that the community lacks clear boundaries. It is divided among three Boston wards; it has traditionally been partitioned among several legislative districts; and its residential areas merge indistinctly into West Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and Hyde Park. Only at the Square does one have the unmistakable sense of standing at the heart of a separate and distinct community with an identity all its own. It is here that one finds a cluster of government and professional offices worthy of any small downtown; it is here that storefronts face a central park; and it is here that roads and bus routes lead.



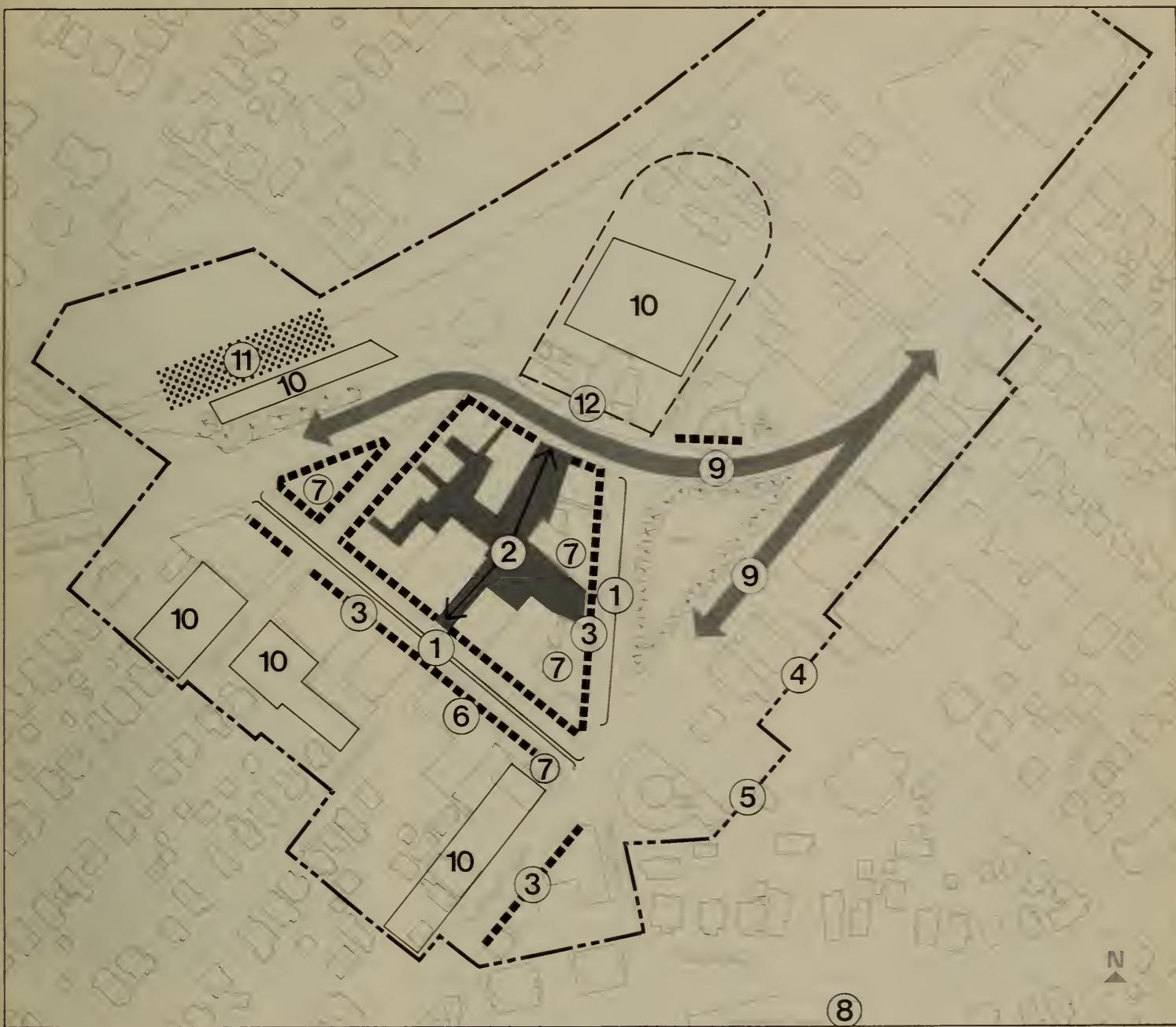
So while this Revitalization Strategy contains proposals for Roslindale Square, it is really a strategy for strengthening the entire neighborhood. If more people can work in the Square, if it is easier for nearby residents to do errands and shop there, and if the Square becomes a more physically attractive place, the desirability of Roslindale as a community, and the confidence with which a homeowner can invest in it, will inevitably be enhanced.

This report is far from final. It includes simple proposals which the community can get behind and support, as well as more complex proposals which the community must genuinely debate. But the time to start is now.



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### Components of the Roslindale Action Strategy

1. Streetscape
2. Taft Court Pedestrian Way
3. Storefronts
4. CARD Designation
5. Community/Local Development Corporation
6. Suffolk Franklin Bank
7. Commercial Reuse Opportunities
8. Roslindale High School
9. Traffic Improvements
10. Parking
11. Train Station
12. New Supermarket?

# The Village's History

Roslindale was annexed to Boston in 1873, only three years after the community's name was coined in conjunction with its becoming a separate postal district. Historically, the area which became Roslindale had been an out-of-the way part of the expansive Town of Roxbury, and following Roxbury's annexation to Boston, of the new Town of West Roxbury. Centre Street, the traditional main thoroughfare of the Roxburys, bypasses Roslindale, and it was not until 1804 that the Dedham Turnpike--now Washington Street--became the first of the district's surviving transportation arteries. With the creation of South Street in the early 19th century, a convergence of streets at the site of the future village center first became recognizable. Taft's Tavern, after which two modern-day streets in the Square are named, stood at the intersection.

After the Civil War, the railroad which now serves as the Needham Branch was built along the western edge of the Square, crossing South Street at grade and spawning a new round of commercial development. The growing village center, in fact, was called "South Street Crossing" before its designation as Roslindale.

A series of changes which occurred in the first part of this century defined the basic street pattern of the Square. The railroad line was elevated onto an embankment, bisecting South Street. A railroad station was built on the embankment in 1900. Robert Street and Belgrade

Avenue became the principal western entryways into the Square, and Corinth Street, which had been a back road lined with stables, consequently leaped ahead of South as the major business street. The triangular area in the midst of the Square, where Ashland Street was flanked by two blocks of commercial buildings, was totally transformed after World War I. The street was abandoned, the buildings removed, and Irving W. Adams Park created. By the 1920's, the Square had assumed the configuration we recognize today--the Park, the railroad embankment, the relatively narrow streets, and the solid line of commercial structures which line them.



Belgrade Ave. and Birch St. now the Mason Building.

*The Square remains an extraordinarily convenient place for shopping, once you're there. From a single parking space or bus-stop, one can walk to all parts of the commercial district because of its arrangement as a web of short streets rather than one elongated strip.*

*What Roslindale Square can hope to achieve is the recapture of much of the trade of Roslindale residents which has ebbed away to the malls and elsewhere.*

*"In the early forties, the Village was the only place to go shopping unless you went in town because there were no shopping centers. Everyone was walking . . . You'd see baby carriages all pushed together."*

An elderly Roslindale resident in Roslindale, Boston 200 Neighborhood Series

This pattern of development has left modern-day planners with a rather obvious dilemma. The Square remains an extraordinarily convenient place for shopping, once you're there. From a single parking space or bus stop, one can walk to all parts of the commercial district because of its arrangement as a network of short streets rather than one elongated strip. Getting there in the first place, however, is made more difficult by that same network which inhibits the flow of traffic, minimizes available parking, and defies



Looking down South Street from Birch and Belgrade.

any governmental agency to tamper with the Park or the streetline.

Roslindale grew residentially as the classic streetcar suburb. While the landscape remained decidedly rural even a short distance from the Square, a steady growth in population began in the 1880's with the introduction of horse-drawn street railway service between Forest Hills and Dedham, via Washington Street, and West Roxbury, via Belgrade Avenue. In 1894, electric vehicles replaced the horses, and the same trolleys which made Roslindale an attractive bedroom community for downtown commuters were reinforcing the Square itself as a commercial center where all modes of transportation met. To this day, the major feeder bus lines into Forest Hills follow the original trolley routes and make Roslindale Square one of the easiest places in the metropolitan area to reach by public transportation.

The "suburb superb", as its real estate boosters once called it, attracted the usual Boston sequence of Yankees followed by Catholic and Jewish immigrant families in the decades between the Industrial Revolution and World War II. Sacred Heart is today one of the largest Catholic parishes in the City, and its church, school, and rectory on Cummins Highway have two attractive Protestant churches for neighbors. The growing population of Eastern Mediterranean groups is represented by Saint Nektarios, a new Greek Orthodox congregation housed in a rehabilitated commercial building on Belgrade Avenue, and the eating establishments in the Square have assumed an increasingly Mediterranean flavor.



Poplar St. already a key focus to the Business District.

In its day, Roslindale Square was the commercial powerhouse of southwest Boston. In addition to the specialty shops and service establishments which identify the Square today, there were two anchor facilities which distinguish major commercial



The same corner today.

centers from lesser neighborhood shopping districts--the supermarket and the department store. In fact, up to the 1960's, there was extraordinary competition. Kresge's is the only surviving member of a quartet of department stores which included Woolworth's, Grant's, and Park-Snow. Roche Brothers, which for years occupied the present Kelleher Market site, was but one of four substantial grocery stores in the Square. A major chain outlet, Stop & Shop, occupied the present Ashmont Supply site until 1967. And the fire which destroyed the Corey Market in 1975 has symbolized, more than anything else, the speed with which the commercial strength of Roslindale Square was sapped--and the difficulty encountered in trying to get it back.



Looking from Poplar to Washington Street.



Livery Stable at Corinth and Birch Streets.

It seems unlikely that Roslindale Square will ever re-emerge as a truly regional commercial center. Working against it are not only the Dedham Mall and the pair of shopping plazas on American Legion Highway, but the serious attempts being made to revitalize other traditional business districts in nearby communities--West Roxbury and Jamaica Plain Centers, Brookline Village, Cleary Square, and Dedham Center. What Roslindale Square can hope to achieve is the recapture of much of the trade of Roslindale residents which has ebbed away to the malls and elsewhere. The energy crisis obviously favors such a recovery, but even more powerful are the pride with which Roslindale people view their community, and their persistent image of the Square as the center of community life.

# The Square Today

Roslindale Square is not without new resources and facilities. Even as the decline of retail business was accelerating in the late 1960's, a series of public improvements was beginning. The old Municipal Building became the home of one of the City's first Little City Halls in 1968, and, more recently, much of the structure was renovated to house a major City health care clinic. A plaza has been completed outside the Municipal Building with landscaping, benches, and a bus shelter.

The Taft Hill parking lot was reconstructed and equipped with new lighting. The vacant Rialto Theatre was demolished and the site converted to a second off-street parking lot. The entire Square has been outfitted with sodium vapor street lighting.

Adams Park has continued to be well maintained, and modest improvements are underway at this time. These public improvements by no means outweigh the slippage in the Square's commercial condition, but they have prevented an impression of general physical deterioration from taking hold. The Square is not a bad looking place.

On the private side, a number of local businesses are undertaking improvements. More importantly, there is a new sense of organization. The early seventies saw the revival of the Roslindale Board of Trade and the creation of Roslindale First, a group formed to promote renewed pride in the neighborhood and its village center. It has been succeeded by the

Roslindale Historical Society, and the Roslindale Association for Community Development. The City responded in 1977 by engaging the consulting firm of Ryan, Elliott to determine the marketability of Roslindale Square as a locus of significant commercial revitalization.

The Ryan, Elliott study, completed in 1978, lends encouragement to those who see an expanded role for Roslindale Square in the economic life of the neighborhood. The market is there. If it is to be tapped, the community and the City must not only come to agreement on a specific agenda, but also persuade state and Federal agencies, and ultimately the retailing and banking communities, to support that agenda out of mutual interest. The Revitalization Strategy that follows consists of a dozen proposals. They are addressed not only to the community and to government, but to the private sector as well, in the honest belief that Roslindale Square can become an increasingly attractive place to invest money as well as hope.



# Revitalization Strategy

*If all proposed actions must stand or fall together, nothing will happen. Our Revitalization Strategy has sought, wherever possible, to put distinct proposals on distinct decision-making tracks, and to identify early-action steps which leave the door open for all acceptable later options.*

Our twelve proposals for the revitalization of Roslindale Square flow directly from the community's own expressed understanding of the Square's history, present condition, and future potential. Translating that understanding into recommendations for a series of specific actions has required that three guidelines be followed: Proposed improvements must be sensitive to the traditional scale of the Square. The overriding commercial goals are to recapture the patronage of Roslindale residents and to rejuvenate existing commercial space. More far-reaching proposals can be justified only as means to those ends. Most of what the Square needs can be achieved simply by making what's there now work better.

Demolition is not to be considered a principal means of improving the Square. Roslindale neither wants nor needs urban renewal in the traditional sense--the demolition of a district's existing features in the speculative hope of attracting new development. The Park, the tight commercial streets, the railway embankment, and the close encirclement of the business district by residential areas must be taken as given features of the development landscape. Slight modifications may be acceptable; to make an omelet, it is said, you have to break some eggs. But any proposal which would demolish for the sheer sake of a change should be rejected out-of-hand, by the City and by the community.

Decisions which appear to be entangled with one another must be disentangled wherever possible. Many of the ideas which have been discussed in Roslindale Square over the past two years have been difficult to translate into concrete proposals, because their ultimate design has had to await the resolution of other issues. If all proposed actions must stand or fall together, nothing will happen. Our Revitalization Strategy has sought, wherever possible, to put distinct proposals on distinct decisionmaking tracks, and to identify early-action steps which leave the door open for all acceptable later options. It strives to identify and recommend actions which can be taken quickly.

In discussing revitalization proposals with people who live and do business in the Square, it has become clear that the agenda of possible actions falls into two different categories. On eleven proposals, there is general support for proceeding, although the community certainly expects to have input into the final product. Several of these consensus actions require relatively little time and money to implement, and are fairly discrete from one another in terms of timing and impacts. They are nonetheless very important--they represent what most concerned citizens agree must happen to improve Roslindale Square today.



Storefront improvements have begun along Washington St. in Roslindale Square.

The twelfth item on the agenda requires a serious assessment of pros and cons by the community and the City. Two proposed actions--the assembly of land for a new supermarket and the explanation of the Square's traffic and parking capacities to serve

it--have been widely discussed in Roslindale, but do not yet appear to have generated consensus support. This is perfectly natural. The potential benefits of a modern supermarket as a stimulator of other business are dramatic; but the physical accommodations and sacrifices which such a development would require cannot be pursued lightly. A supermarket

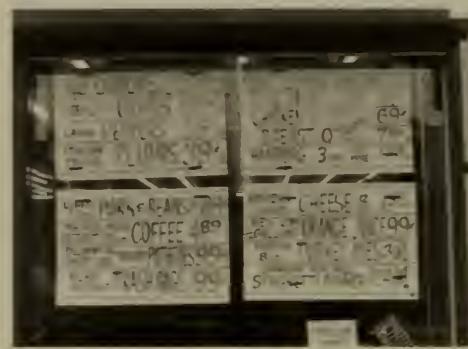
could be developed either sooner or later--we have disentangled it from other proposals. It could help leverage other improvements, but it could just as well be leveraged by them. The final part of this Strategy outlines the costs and benefits of the supermarket and related traffic and parking proposals, so that a thorough community discussion can begin.

## Business Environment

Despite the attractiveness of Adams Park and the generally sound physical condition of the buildings, Roslindale Square has become a rather drab place. The problem, as in many small business districts, is that the solution is too simple to have attracted serious attention. Before any new development is likely to appear, the City and the merchants can be well on the way to upgrading the environment of the existing streets and storefronts, and expanding the influence of Adams Park by creating new pedestrian spaces in the central part of the Square. It



is important that the public and private components proceed in tandem--the merchants and the City must each believe that the other is serious about enhancing the business environment.



## Streetscape 1

*Poplar Street presents a unique opportunity to extend the Park atmosphere right up to the storefronts, without actually closing the street and losing the parking spaces it provides.*

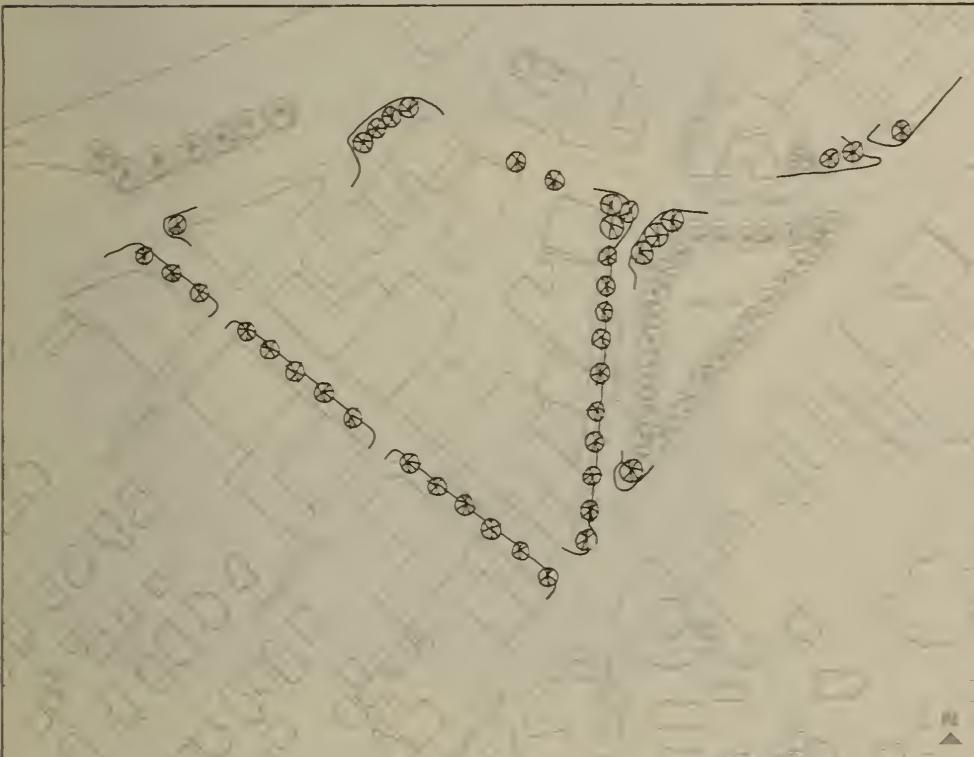
*Corinth Street, the single most important shopping street in the Square, is particularly ill-equipped to serve that function . . . nothing will be easier to remedy than the Street's bleak appearance.*

The heart of the Roslindale commercial district is the array of stores on Corinth and Poplar Streets. These two streets, however, suffer the visual deficiencies of many older urban business districts--narrow sidewalks, no street furniture, and, except on the Park side of Poplar, no trees. This can be changed through improvements which are neither very time-consuming nor very expensive.

Poplar Street presents a unique opportunity to extend the Park atmosphere right up to the storefronts, without actually closing the street and losing the parking spaces

it provides. As part of the traffic improvements to be discussed later, it is proposed to reintroduce two-way traffic to both South and Washington Streets. This will enable Poplar, which currently serves as part of the through-traffic system, to be converted to its more traditional function--a purely local street for people who want to park, shop, and relax. Traffic can be reduced to a single lane, the sidewalks can be widened on both the Park and the storefront sides, and "neck-downs" can be constructed at the intersections to provide safer and more attractive pedestrian crossing areas. At the western tip of the Park, the

traffic moving through the Square, including the four major bus routes from West Roxbury. Parking is poorly organized, and a crucial block is occupied by the burned-out Corey Market building. Subsequent sections of this report propose remedies for all of these de-



Sidewalk widening, benches, planters and well established street trees are proposed for the business district.

sea of asphalt which forms the intersection with South Street can be reduced in size, adding to the effective area of the Park itself. On the storefront side, the widened sidewalk can be beautified with brick-paved areas, planters, benches, and trees.

Corinth Street, the single most important shopping street in the Square, is particularly ill-equipped to serve that function. It carries all of the west-to-east

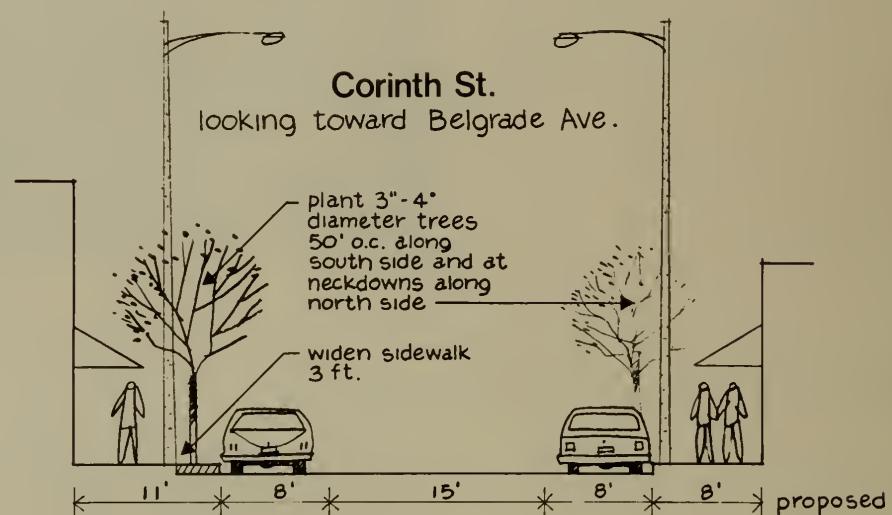
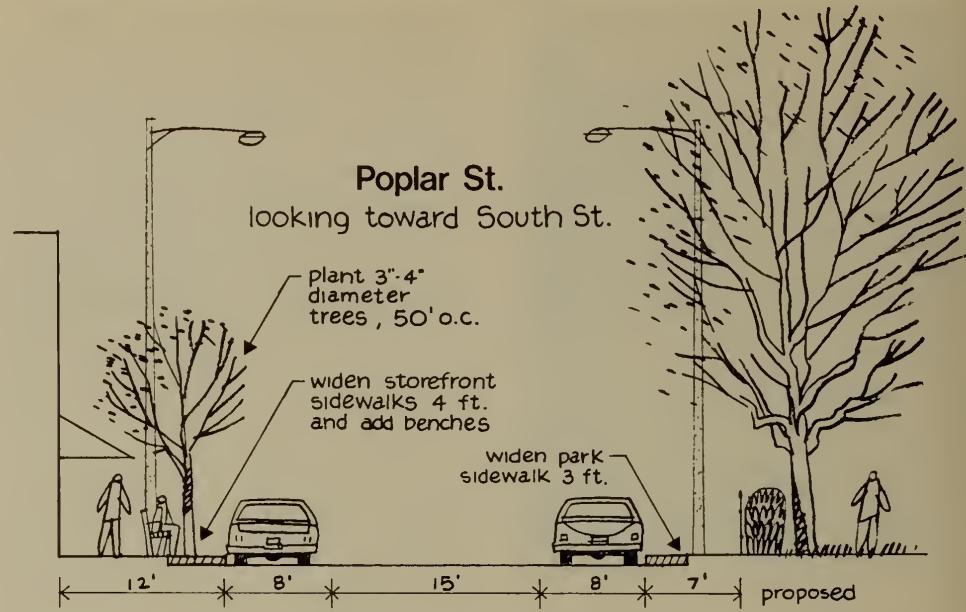
deficiencies, but nothing will be easier to remedy than the Street's bleak appearance.

With most through-traffic to be removed from Corinth Street, the sidewalk can be widened on the south side to accommodate trees, benches, and planters. Trees can also be planted on the north sidewalk.

## Funding and Implementation

The reconstruction of Poplar Street is estimated to cost \$120,000. Since it would be difficult to narrow Poplar Street while it is still carrying buses and other through-traffic, and since proper placement of the amenities should be coordinated with the curb relocation and bricking, the Poplar Street work should be implemented as part of the larger traffic improvement project for the Square. As a state-Federal Urban Systems project, or as a City activity, this overall program could enter construction as early as two years from now.

The beautification program for Corinth Street is estimated to cost \$80,000. While these items could arguably be included in the overall traffic improvement project, the City may wish to expedite them as a separate Block Grant or Capital Budget undertaking.





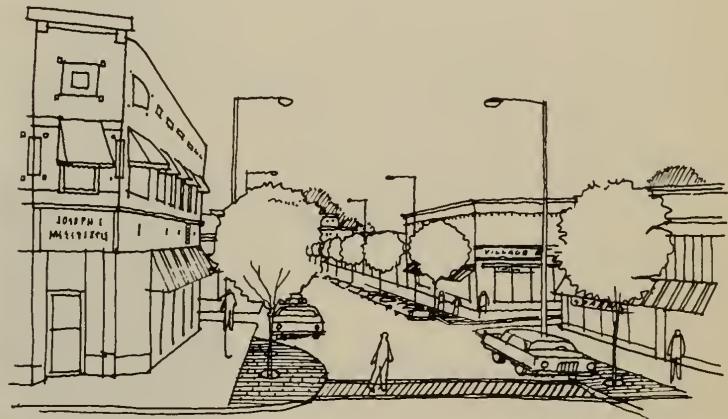
Poplar St. today.



Poplar St. with streetscape improvements.



Corinth St. today.



Corinth St. with streetscape improvements.

## Public Streetscape Improvements

\$

### POPLAR STREET (Urban Systems, 1981)

Relocation of curblines and bricking  
of areas; trees and amenities

\$120,000

### CORINTH STREET (City of Boston, 1980, or Urban Systems, 1981)

Widening of south sidewalk;  
trees and amenities

\$ 80,000

# Taft Court Pedestrian Way

## 2

The opportunity to create a dramatic new pedestrian corridor in the Square is ripe for the taking. The building long occupied by the Park-Snow department store on South Street burned in 1977 and has since been demolished. The City is negotiating, and expects to consummate this year, the acquisition of the site. Along with Taft Court, an existing public way which enters the central business block from Corinth Street, this acquisition will create a single public passage through the heart of the Square. The excellent idea of exploiting this passage as an attractive pedestrian way originated in the community.



Attractive paving, trees, benches and cafes will replace these parked cars though service access to shops will be maintained.



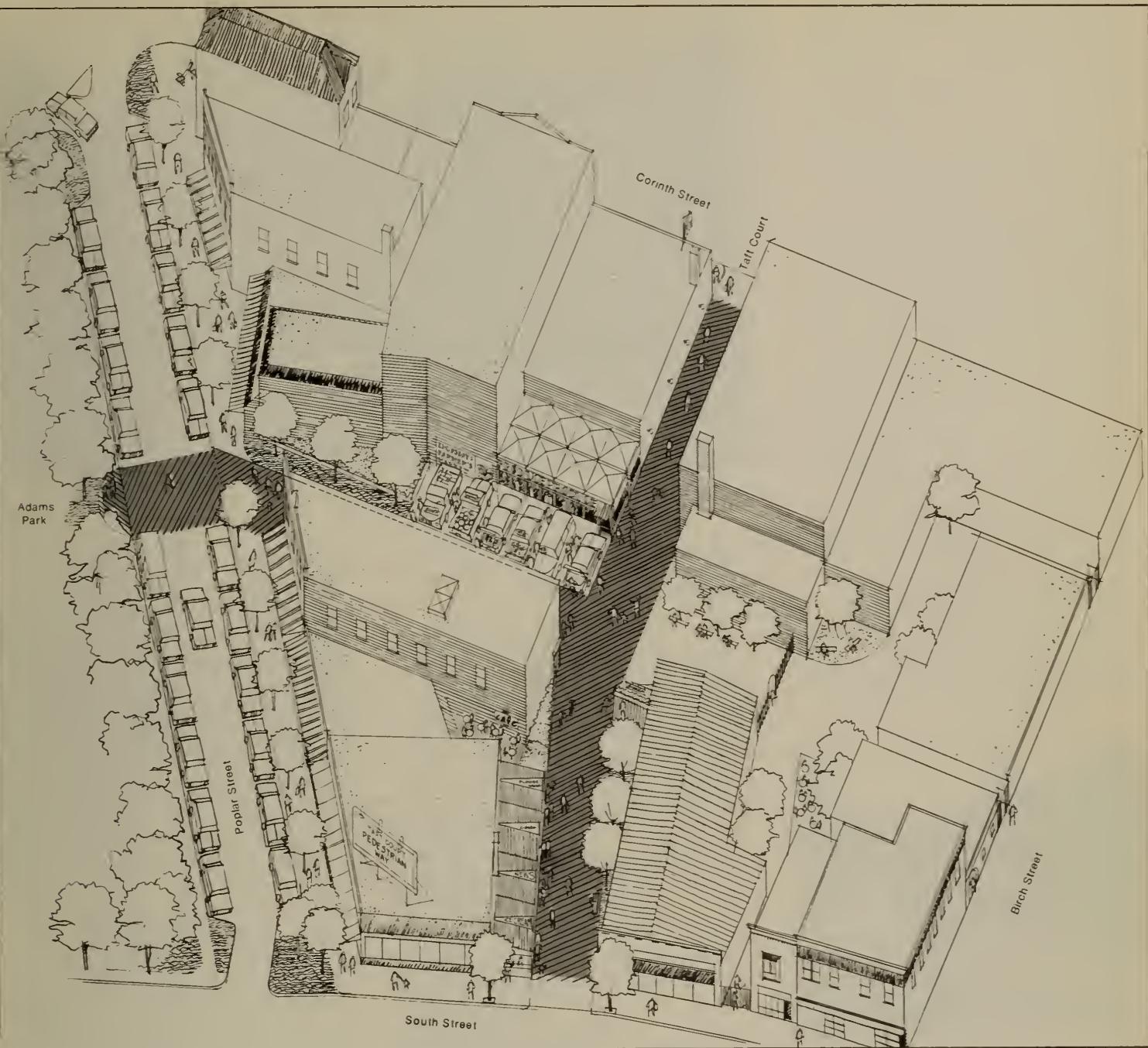
This unpaved, uninviting area can become an attractive pedestrian area.

Initially, the pedestrian way will provide direct access between Corinth and South Streets, linking the Square's main concentration of shops with its principal off-street parking lot. If a supermarket were eventually developed on Taft Hill, the pedestrian way would form the critical link between the two commercial anchors of the Square.

Eventually, the private alleys which enter the inner court area from Birch Street could be linked to the pedestrian way, providing access between the future train and

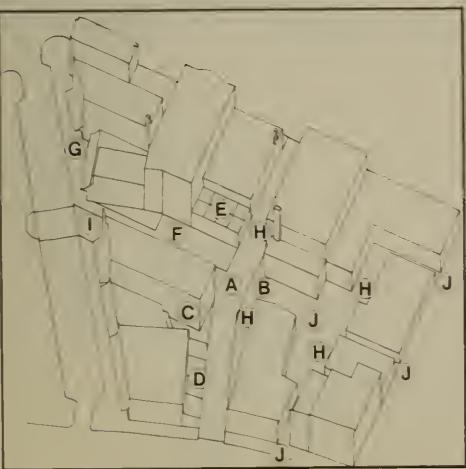
*The opportunity exists to create a unified pedestrian network in the heart of the Square. The components would be the pedestrian way, the new amenities on Corinth Street, the fully redesigned Poplar Street, and Adams Park. The creation of this network will reinforce the traditional role of Adams Park as the centerpiece of Roslindale Square — by extending the feeling of the Park westward into the main shopping area.*

bus stops on Belgrade Avenue and the central business area. Finally, the pedestrian way could be linked directly to the redesigned Poplar Street by removing (or less preferably constructing an arcade through) a small commercial building on Poplar which stands at mid-block. If this building were acquired and its tenants relocated within the Square at the City's expense, the opportunity would exist to create a unified pedestrian network in the heart of the Square. The components would be the pedestrian way, the new amenities on Corinth Street, the fully redesigned Poplar Street, and Adams Park. The creation of this network will reinforce the traditional role of Adams Park as the centerpiece of Roslindale Square—by extending the feeling of the Park westward into the main shopping area.



### Possible Components of a Pedestrian Way

- A. Pave for pedestrians and off-hour deliveries
- B. Provide benches, lighting, and additional trees
- C. Create outdoor cafes
- D. Establish small stalls or shops
- E. Year-round covered produce scales
- F. Seasonal farmer's truck sales
- G. Widen sidewalk and plant street trees
- H. Open backs of stores to the pedestrian way
- I. Acquire building to connect pedestrian way with Adams Park
- J. Secure private courtway to minimize security problems



Hopefully, the pedestrian way will be more than a place to walk through. It should also provide a prime new location for commercial activity, particularly of an outdoor, food-related nature. Many variations have been suggested--a permanent, roofed seasonal produce market with rental stalls; a weekly, harvest-time farmers' market; an expansion of the small existing supermarket; specialty shops attached to the backs of buildings; outdoor cafes; the creation of rear entrances by bakeries or restaurants. Other suggestions involve the creation of an outdoor civic space for street performances or even ice skating. While traffic and parking should be excluded from the pedestrian way entirely, access will be preserved for emergency and service vehicles and for off-hour deliveries.



In the second phase of work, the pedestrian way may extend through to Poplar St. and Adams Park in this area.

## Funding and Implementation

The essential first phase of the pedestrian way development is the conversion of the City-owned land from the muddy, unpaved area it is now into a graded, drained, and lighted passageway, with the main route between Corinth and South Streets surfaced with an attractive paving material. The City is committed to implement this work as soon as possible--this fall, if the Park-Snow site acquisition can be completed in time. This initial work, estimated to cost \$40,000, will be funded through the Capital Budget. Meanwhile, design can be underway on the completion of the public space with permanent, attractive lighting, plazas, and pedestrian amenities--benches, plantings, trash receptacles,

public art, and the like. This more polished public treatment, estimated to cost \$200,000, will also be a City expense. Under certain circumstances, an Urban Development Action Grant might be available to defray the costs.

Rather than attempting to predetermine the commercial activities to be supported by the pedestrian way, the City and the community can afford to wait and experiment. Most costs incurred in establishing such activities will be private. The pedestrian linkage to Birch and Poplar Streets, involving potential City acquisition of private properties, can also await this later phase, although negotiations might profitably begin sooner.

## Taft Court Pedestrian Way

\$

### EARLY ACTION (1979-80)

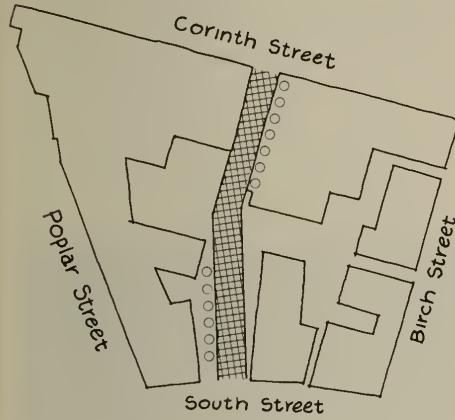
Grading, drainage;  
paving, interim lights \$ 40,000

### PHASE I (1980-81)

Permanent lights, amenities;  
expansion of paved area \$200,000

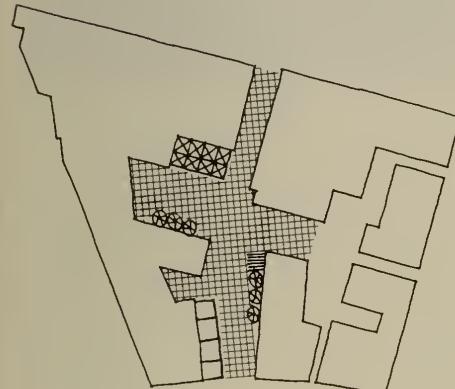
### PHASE II (WHEN APPROPRIATE)

Public links to Poplar, Birch Streets To be determined



### Early Action

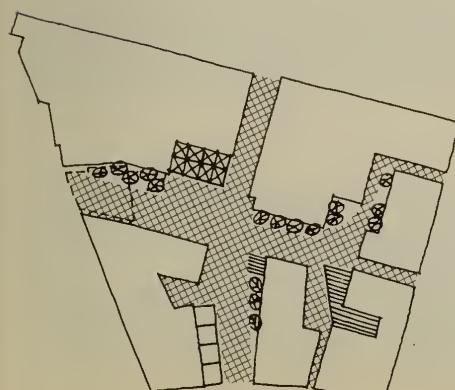
Paving and lighting  
Improve pedestrian access  
from Taft Hill parking to  
Corinth Street



### Phase 1

PUBLIC  
Expand paving  
Add trees and benches

PRIVATE  
Open backs of stores to  
inner block  
Establish cafes  
Sell produce from trucks  
and market extension  
Add small shop stalls



### Phase 2

PUBLIC  
Remove building on Poplar  
to link mall to Park

PRIVATE  
Open backs of stores  
along Birch to inner block  
Plant additional trees  
Provide gates at alleys  
to give nighttime security

## Storefronts

### 3



A principal reason for public investment in the streets and pedestrian areas of the Square is the hope that existing merchants will respond by taking full advantage of available resources for upgrading their storefronts. As in most small business districts, the years have brought a surface disarray to the Square. Signs of every description cry out in complete disharmony; awnings are a thing of the past; and the interesting mixture of building types--old stables, office buildings, and typical Main Street storefronts--is covered with tin and plastic.

*Signs of every description cry out in complete disharmony; awnings are a thing of the past; and the interesting mixture of building types -- old stables, office buildings, and typical Main Street storefronts -- is covered with tin and plastic . . . Roslindale Square is one of the first areas in the City to have full access to a pair of public assistance programs for storefront improvements.*

None of this is disastrous, but combined with the drab streetscape, it's nothing special either. And that is what the merchants and professionals of Roslindale Square should have--something special, something that will attract shoppers and clients who don't have to come here.

Through the Boston Neighborhood Business District Program, an urban design consultant, Favermann Associates, has prepared a package of guidelines for use by merchants who wish to upgrade their facades. Examples are presented on this page. A Design Review Committee made up of Roslindale merchants and residents has been formed, and the guidelines have been approved.



Poplar St. storefronts.

## Funding and Implementation

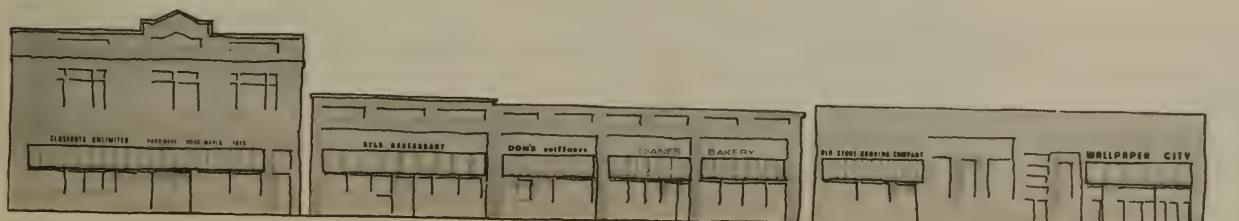
Roslindale Square is one of the first areas in the City to have full access to a pair of public assistance programs for storefront improvements. Owners of commercial properties in the Square can now take advantage of RESTORE, the Block Grant-funded program which provides a 20% cash rebate for storefront improvement costs, up to a maximum rebate of \$1000. Free architectural consultation is available for RESTORE users. The City has committed \$15,000 in RESTORE funds to Roslindale Square for the current fiscal year, and is prepared to increase that amount over the next two years if businesses respond. An important businessman in the Square, contractor Ronald Trethewey, has gotten the ball rolling by using RESTORE funds and design guidelines on his block of eight storefronts on Washington Street.

The second available program is the Section 312 Commercial Loan Program offered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Through the City, which has designated Roslindale Square a target area, a few larger renovation projects will be eligible to have up to half their costs financed through a government loan at 3% interest. The rehabilitation work must be compatible with the design guidelines established through RESTORE, and the project must make sense in the overall public and private revitalization strategy for the Square. The maximum loan is \$100,000, although, if loan requests are smaller, more businesses will have a chance. Section 312 loan projects can be more extensive than RESTORE, including both exterior facade improvements and interior renovation of the commercial space.

The proprietors of Kelleher's Market have begun a major program of exterior and interior renovation. While the 312 program has not been available thus far, the Kelleher improvements should be an example to other merchants for whom such assistance could be critical.



Washington St. storefronts.



Poplar St. continued.

# New Financial Tools for Private Investment

Between 1975 and 1978, Massachusetts established important new financial incentive programs for stimulating private reinvestment in older urban business districts. The City hopes to see Roslindale Square take full advantage of these tools. While a so-called CARD designation

and a new Community/Local Development Corporation could be helpful in attracting major new commercial development, these mechanisms also have wider and perhaps more immediate applicability.

## CARD Designation

### 4

A municipality, with state approval, can designate a Commercial Area Revitalization District (CARD) in an older urban business center. Within the boundaries established by the so-called CARD plan, new or expanding commercial enterprises can become eligible for three special financial incentives which have previously been offered only to industrial projects:

low interest mortgages, leveraged by the sale to financial institutions of Federally tax-exempt revenue bonds;

state mortgage insurance on a portion of private loans secured for the rehabilitation of an existing building;

property tax relief for certain new or expanding businesses with five or more employees and Massachusetts corporate tax liability.

These incentives are designed to bring urban commercial districts into marketing parity with the suburban and strip locations which have had the upper hand for so long.

The City of Boston has established a CARD at Roslindale Square. As the map shows, the boundaries are

drawn quite tightly around the village center, making concentrated commercial investment there more attractive.

A successful neighborhood public meeting on the CARD plan was held earlier this year, and all local and state approvals are now in hand. In the short term, CARD incentives will be of practical benefit only to commercial investments of approximately \$250,000 or more. Such opportunities can be structured in the Square, both for existing commercial space and for new development.

A commercial enterprise which wishes to take advantage of the principal CARD financial incentive--tax-free revenue bond mortgages--must obtain the approval of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Boston Industrial Development Finance Agency, the City Council, and the Massachusetts Industrial Finance Agency. From the businessman's standpoint, these steps can be cleared in an expeditious and coordinated fashion. From the community's standpoint, ample opportunity for citizen input on each proposed CARD project is provided during the BRA and City Council stages of the approval process.

*These incentives are designed to bring urban commercial districts into marketing parity with the suburban and strip locations which have had the upper hand for so long.*



Commercial Area Revitalization District (CARD)

# Community/Local Development Corporation

## 5

*The City and state would enthusiastically support the creation of a single neighborhood body which combines the functions of a Local Development Corporation for Federal SBA assistance and a Community Development Corporation for state CDFC assistance.*

*Small business districts are coming to realize that a major advantage enjoyed by shopping malls is their collective management — common parking, coordinated sales, jointly purchased security and advertising.*

Community development corporations have become a widespread, flexible tool for marrying outside money to neighborhood initiative, sensitivity, and participation. Several Boston neighborhoods have formed CDC's of one kind or another. We recommend that Roslindale form a multi-purpose neighborhood corporation capable of serving as the formal conduit for various state and Federal business programs and as the informal packager of other initiatives in the Square.

Two programs for local business assistance require the formation of specific corporate bodies:

THE FEDERAL SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA) '502' PROGRAM. Within eligible business districts (including Roslindale Square), a so-called Local Development Corporation can co-venture business projects with a bank, either loaning 10% and guaranteeing the rest, or loaning 40% outright. SBA can also guarantee bank loans on a direct (non-LDC) basis. Clearly, however, the timely identification of opportunities for SBA assistance of all kinds can best be facilitated by a neighborhood body familiar with both SBA programs and the local business scene. While the Roslindale Association for Community Development is an eligible LDC, no SBA transactions have yet arisen.

THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION (CDFC), a new resource created by the Legislature in 1976. CDFC co-ventures neighborhood business initiatives in three-way partnerships which must also include a so-called Community Development Corporation open to community membership within defined boundaries and having at least one-half of its Board of Directors elected by the membership. CDFC funds can take the form of equity, loans, loan guarantees, or a combination. One potential role for this mechanism was demonstrated in Codman Square earlier this year, when a CDC/CDFC/bank partnership acquired and reopened the vacated FINAST supermarket.

The City and state would enthusiastically support the creation of a single neighborhood body which combines the functions of a Local Development Corporation for Federal SBA assistance and a Community Development Corporation for state CDFC assistance. Such an entity could not only make creative combinations of SBA and CDFC assistance to neighborhood businesses, but it could also be a central clearinghouse for a variety of other programs, including:

CARD FINANCING. CDC's are eligible users of the tax-free bond financing made available by the CARD designation described earlier. This could enable a CDC to co-venture a single large commercial project with an entrepreneur. State and City officials are also exploring ways in which a CDC might package several lesser business improvements, too small

individually to benefit from CARD financial incentives, into a master project of sufficient magnitude.

**COORDINATED BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS.** If the majority of small businesses in the Square are to be persuaded to undertake improvements, coordination and momentum will be necessities. The full array of financial programs--RE-STORE, SBA, 312, CDFC--will have to be packaged with each other and with ready sources of bank financing. Architectural and contracting services for a series of small projects might be purchased more efficiently in bulk. CETA workers might even be used for basic tasks common to several small improvement projects. These resources can be used most creatively and effectively if organized by a CDC.

**MANAGEMENT OF THE BUSINESS DISTRICT.** Small business districts are coming to realize that a major advantage enjoyed by shopping malls is their collective management--common parking, coordinated sales, jointly purchased security and advertising. The Roslindale Square business community recognizes this issue and has made a beginning by organizing sidewalk sale days and festivals. Much more could be done by a CDC/LDC deeply involved in the nuts and bolts of business revitalization in the Square. For example, many of our recommendations for relieving parking congestion will require a high degree of cooperation among businesses; a CDC/LDC would be essential in brokering and enforcing the necessary agreements.

## **What a Roslindale Community/ Local Development Corporation Could Do for Business in the Square**

Co-sponsor commercial development in new and reused buildings

Channel state and Federal financial assistance to small businesses

Use state commercial financing tools available in CARD districts:

- low-interest mortgages
- mortgage guarantees
- property tax relief

Coordinate storefront improvements

Manage cooperative promotional, security, and parking programs

## New Development in Old Buildings

Effective revitalization means more than upgrading existing businesses. New business is needed as well, and much of it can be developed in existing vacant or underutilized space.



### Suffolk Franklin Bank

6

The Suffolk Franklin branch in Roslindale Square is currently housed in cramped quarters on Birch Street. In conjunction with the Bank's central office policy of making strategic investments in revitalization districts, Suffolk Franklin has decided to relocate their branch facilities on the site of the burned-out Corey Market. This site, at the corner of Corinth and Cohasset Streets, is the single most symbolic eyesore in the Square. Where

Its location in the heart of the major business street makes it all the uglier.



Parking will be provided at the rear of the site.



Site of new Suffolk Franklin Bank on Corinth St.

a mid-sized supermarket and a Brigham's restaurant operated just a few years ago, there is now a boarded-up shell.

Suffolk Franklin has purchased the Corey Market property and the unsightly Astoria Motors parcel which backs it on Washington Street. Design is underway for a 5,000 square foot bank branch office, with a strong possibility of additional space for an office tenant. The Astoria property will provide the Bank with adequate parking and with access for a drive-through window.

The one-story building will be designed with sensitivity to the remainder of Corinth Street, and the bicycle shop which currently occupies a small usable portion of the Corey building will be relocated in or near the Square. The Suffolk Franklin project will cost up to one million dollars and should be in construction in 1980.

This project is pivotal in the revitalization of Roslindale Square. Not only is the investment substantial and the product worthwhile, but prompt implementation will bring the kind of credibility that only a tangible private

commitment can bring. Suffolk Franklin has indicated its willingness to follow its initial project with an on-going role in the revitalization of the business district, both within the Cohasset-Corinth-Washington block and elsewhere. They are joined by the Boston Five Cents Savings Bank, which has upgraded its own South Street facilities and, like Suffolk Franklin, is an important participant in the Square's major business organizations.



Parking and access to the new bank will extend through to Washington St. across this site.



# Commercial Reuse Opportunities

## 7

Unlike other commercial districts where vacancies and dilapidation have overwhelmed the building stock, Roslindale Square is fortunate in that its buildings remain in sound condition. While one might speculate about a wide variety of buildings and uses, four outstanding opportunities exist for the upgrading of multi-story structures, perhaps with retail on the street floor and offices above.

The Masons' Block. A truly distinctive, historic building is the three-story triangular brick structure at the intersection of Birch and Belgrade. Along with an adjoining separately-owned office building, the Masons' Building forms a crucial gateway block on the Square's

floors in the Masons' Building, but they are known to be looking for larger quarters, preferably in a first-floor location in or very near the Square. The traffic and parking recommendations which appear later in this report would improve parking, vehicle access, and bus access to the Masons' block. Suffolk Franklin is eager to locate a quality tenant in the attractive first-floor space it is vacating just across Birch street.

The Spa. The two-story building which anchors the corner of Corinth and Washington Streets has a long-time newsstand and spa business on the street floor, and a partially vacant second floor. The block in which this building is located is



Masons' block.



Spa building on Corinth St.

at the focus of several proposed improvements. Most importantly, the Suffolk Franklin bank office building will replace the Corey Market shell as a neighbor. Corinth Street will be reinforced as a commercial street, through traffic modifications and streetscape improvements. The Corinth-Washington corner should be an obvious focal point for streetscape amenities. The creation of additional parking on the Washington Street side of the block is a possibility. And across Washington Street, the first significant use of RE-STORE funds is being made at

If revitalizing Roslindale Square largely means making what's there work better, full utilization of buildings such as these must be one of the principal end products.

western edge. The southwest Boston offices of the Social Security Administration currently occupy most of two

the Trethewey properties. The Spa building, in short, is likely to occupy an increasingly valuable corner as the revitalization of the Square proceeds.

#### The Poplar Street Brick

#### Buildings: 17-21 and 41-45.

The row of storefronts on Poplar Street is highlighted by a pair of two-story brick buildings. Ironically, both have marginal discount retail uses on the first floor and sorely underutilized office space on the second. With Poplar Street completely redesigned as a parking street extending the image of the Park to the storefronts and with a pedestrian way offering an attractive rear entry for the street-floor users, both buildings should be prime candidates for improvement and reuse. An illustrative private investment is already occurring on the same street, with Diane's Bakery expanding and adding a small restaurant. When the public improvements proposed for Poplar Street and the pedestrian way have been implemented, these two buildings should be among the most appealing locations in any of Boston's neighborhood commercial centers.



Two story building on Poplar St.--an opportunity for better use of upper floors.

### Funding and Implementation

The present or future owners of these buildings could make effective use of the array of financial incentives described previously. Rehabilitation projects of any significant cost are eligible for state mortgage guarantees under the CARD program and projects costing approximately \$250,000 or more are large enough to make practical use of the low-interest mortgage opportunity which the CARD provides through tax-free revenue bonds. A Roslindale Community/Local Development Corporation could serve as a co-venturer, bringing state CDFC equity funds and Federal SBA 502 loans into a reuse project. A commercial 312

loan could play a key role in rehabilitating a single building, with its \$100,000 matching loan limit.

Reusing these buildings is important for success and would encourage further reinvestment in surrounding structures. Each of these buildings anchors the street or corner on which it is located. If revitalizing Roslindale Square largely means making what's there work better, full utilization of buildings such as these must be one of the principal end products.

# Roslindale High School

## 8

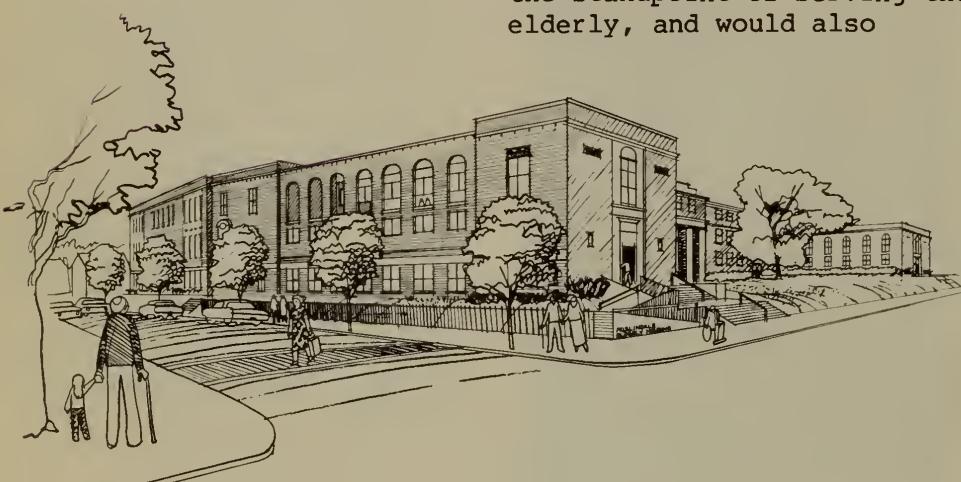
The social fabric of Roslindale Square suffered a serious tear when the High School, located just east of the commercial concentration, was closed in 1976. The victim of age and of far-reaching organizational changes in the Boston School system, the large three-story brick structure on Poplar Street has been vacant ever since. After three years of governmental uncertainty over the preferred reuse, the City, School Department, and community have come to agreement that subsidized elderly housing should be developed in the building. It has been suggested that space also be provided for social agencies which serve the elderly and for a community meeting place. Consolidating these functions in a portion of the High School makes sense from the standpoint of serving the elderly, and would also

in an attractive way is a symbol of recovery. In more than one City in Massachusetts, elderly people are now living in the schools they once attended as children. It lends an air of continuity and stability to a city or village center.



### Funding and Implementation

The City has taken control of the building from the School Department, and has advertised for private housing developers. The housing will be built privately, and the construction can be financed in either of two ways. The Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) can provide a mortgage loan for some or all of the construction and permanent financing at below-market interest rates. Alternatively, if a non-profit corporation is the developer or the partner in a joint venture, a direct construction loan can be sought from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through the Section 202 Program. In either case, rent levels will be held to a maximum of 25% of the tenant's income through the HUD Section 8 rent subsidy program.



create some prime rentable office space in the Square, where the agencies in question are now housed.

The value of an elderly residential development in this location is clear. From the merchants' standpoint, elderly housing is a universally welcomed addition to a business district. For the image of the Square, the vacant High School is a symbol of decline; reusing the facility

*For the image of the Square, the vacant High School is a symbol of decline; reusing the facility in a more attractive way is a symbol of recovery. In more than one City in Massachusetts, elderly people are now living in the schools they once attended as children. It lends an air of continuity and stability to a city or village center.*

## Transportation

Roslindale Square is not the easiest place in the world to get to, park in, or get out of. All discussions of revitalization strategies include traffic and parking components and rightly so. Yet, it is important to remember several things. First, many people get to Roslindale Square on foot or by bus, and no analysis of parking needs can ignore this. Second, some traffic congestion is needed to keep a business district vital. Small downtowns which embraced bypasses or efficient four-lane through-traffic carriers in the sixties have come to regret their choice. Third, people identify with Roslindale Square, not with a parking lot or a road. None of

this means that physical solutions are not necessary--they are. But the temptation to over-build, and in the process over-demolish, must be avoided. Ironically, the other danger inherent in over-planning is that in fact nothing will get built. The more grandiose and costly a project, the more rigidly its implementation is envisioned in a single phase, and the more severe its social or environmental impacts, the greater the likelihood that the necessary state and Federal approvals will never be obtained.



# Traffic Improvements

## 9

*It is important to keep in mind the objectives of a traffic improvement. We would argue that the goal is not to achieve the best possible traffic solution. Rather, it is to achieve the best all-around revitalization solution with a traffic component that works.*

*As long as the scale of commercial activity in the Square generally, and on South Street in particular, remains approximately as it is now, traffic operations can be improved without expanding South Street to four lanes and without demolishing any of the South Street buildings.*

Before the inception of the present study, two general alternatives for traffic improvement had been discussed. One, which made the most sense from the pure and narrow standpoint of traffic operations engineering, would have continued Cummins Highway right through Adams Park and into a widened South Street. The Park land would have been redistributed into two triangular areas, each fronting a row of stores. The community has, from all indications, rejected this solution as too radical a dismemberment of the traditional features of the Square. We agree.

A more recent alternative, introduced in conjunction with the Ryan, Elliott study, would have widened South Street to four lanes for the purpose of reintroducing two-way traffic. To avoid incursions into either the central block of the Square or the Park, this alternative would have relocated South Street to a corridor now occupied by the six commercial buildings which line its northern sidewalk. Substantial and well-grounded opposition has recently been raised to demolition of this scale.

It is important to keep in mind the objectives of a traffic improvement. We would argue that the goal is not to achieve the best possible traffic solution. Rather, it is to achieve the best all-around revitalization solution with a traffic component that works. In this light, there are four specific objectives to be pursued:

- reinforce Corinth and Poplar as shopping, service, and parking streets by relieving them of through-traffic;
- improve the flow of through-traffic by segregating it onto streets which are not serving local commercial functions;
- avoid excessive and speculative demolition;
- plan a project that can be implemented sooner rather than later.

All of the major traffic proposals, including our own, achieve the first two objectives by reintroducing two-way traffic to South and Washington Streets. The through-traffic corridor for the major east-west movement between Forest Hills and West Roxbury becomes South-Belgrade, and the Square ceases to operate as a double rotary, in which Corinth and Poplar Streets are forced to carry full loads of through traffic.



Corinth St. is clogged with through traffic and buses.

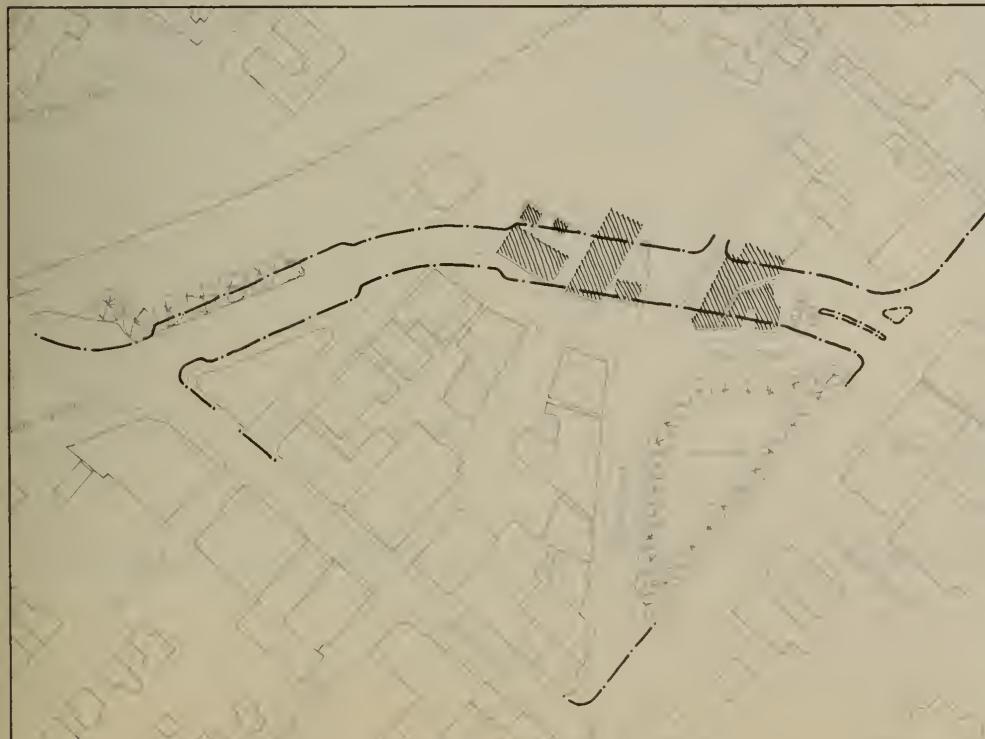
What is new about the traffic solution we offer is that it meets the second two objectives as well. It is likely that two-way traffic can be accommodated--not perfectly, but adequately--by a South Street which more or

less follows its present route. And as long as the scale of commercial activity in the Square generally, and on South Street in particular, remains approximately as it is now, traffic operations can be improved without expanding South Street to four lanes and without demolishing any of the South Street buildings.

The plan, three variations of which are illustrated here, has the following characteristics:

- South Street is restriped to three lanes between Washington and Belgrade with two lanes eastbound and one westbound;
- Corinth Street is reversed from its present direction, to run westbound; the scheme thus provides a total of two lanes in each direction, with the westbound lanes split between South and Corinth;

- Washington Street handles two-way traffic through the Square;
- the South-Washington intersection, the most difficult in the Square, forbids left turns from Washington onto South, allowing only the right turn from South to Washington and forcing vehicles traveling from Cummins Highway to Belgrade Avenue to use Corinth Street. While this pattern represents some traffic operations sacrifice, it allows the South-Washington intersection to be redesigned without necessitating any significant incursion into Adams Park;
- Poplar Street is reversed in direction, feeding into the extra eastbound lane on South Street;
- a completely new signal is installed at the Corinth-Belgrade intersection, the signals at Washington-Cummins and South-Washington are built, and all signals in the Square are reprogrammed;
- on-street parking spaces on portions of South and Washington Streets are removed;
- the sidewalk widening and amenities treatment on Poplar and Corinth Streets, described earlier in this report, are implemented.



#### Ryan, Elliott Proposal

Two-way, 4 lane South St.

Take all buildings on north side of South St. between Washington St. and Belgrade Ave.

Close Poplar St. and expand park

The bottleneck corner of South and Belgrade can be widened for two-way traffic in any of three ways. Most simply and cheaply, the railroad embankment can be scooped out at the South Street end to provide a wider turn and a pull-off for west-bound buses. This alternative, shown in Scheme A, may not allow three lanes between Belgrade and Poplar. But even two unobstructed, free-moving lanes, plus one on Corinth, would be a functional improvement over present conditions. If this alternative can be made to work from an engineering standpoint, it should be adopted.

If it cannot, Scheme B would be the most reasonable alternative from a business district standpoint. It would realign Belgrade Avenue

onto a sweeping curve through the length of the embankment, requiring the relocation of the granite retaining wall and the loss of several mature trees atop it. This scheme would avoid demolishing any buildings and, as a by-product, would create a new off-street parking area surrounding the Masons' Block. This scheme is a relatively expensive one, and if state and Federal support cannot be obtained or if implementation would take an unacceptably long time, the community and the City may have to consider Scheme C. This alternative widens the Belgrade-South intersection by demolishing the wood-frame building on the corner. It should be embraced only as a last resort.

## Proposed Traffic Solutions

### OPERATIONAL CHANGES

Two-way, 3 lane, South St.

Two-way Washington St.

No left turn, Washington to South

Reverse Corinth St.

Reverse Poplar St.

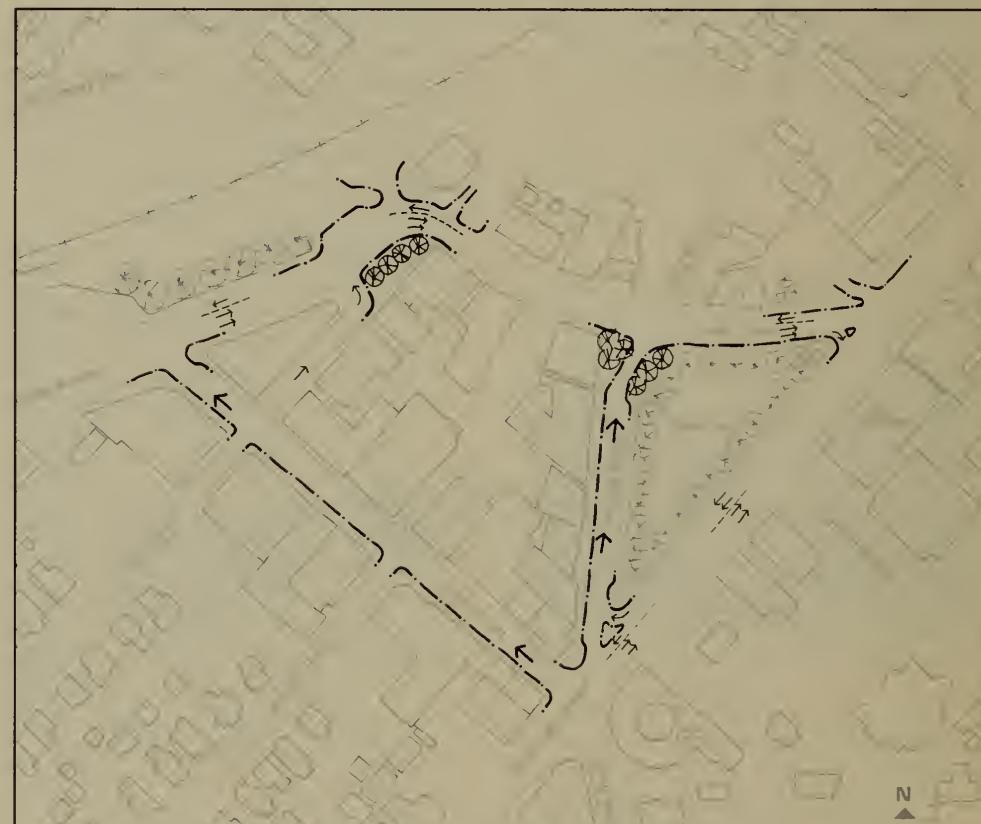
Remove some on-street parking

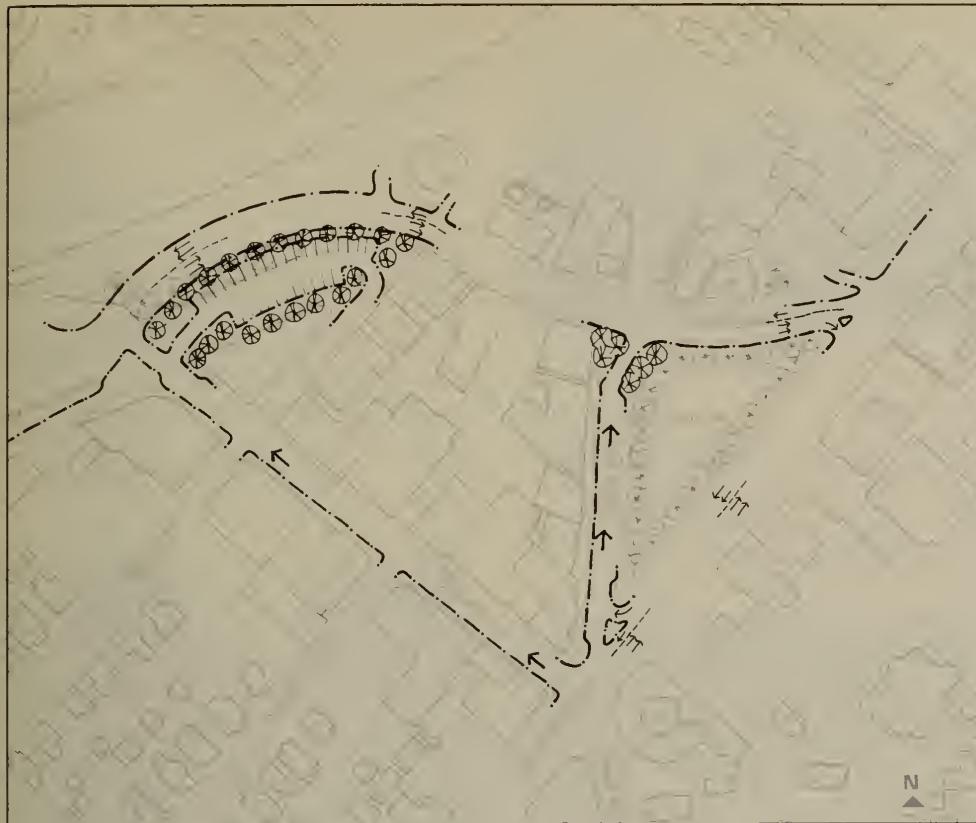
### Alternative Steps to Ease South – Belgrade Intersection

#### Alternative A

No takings

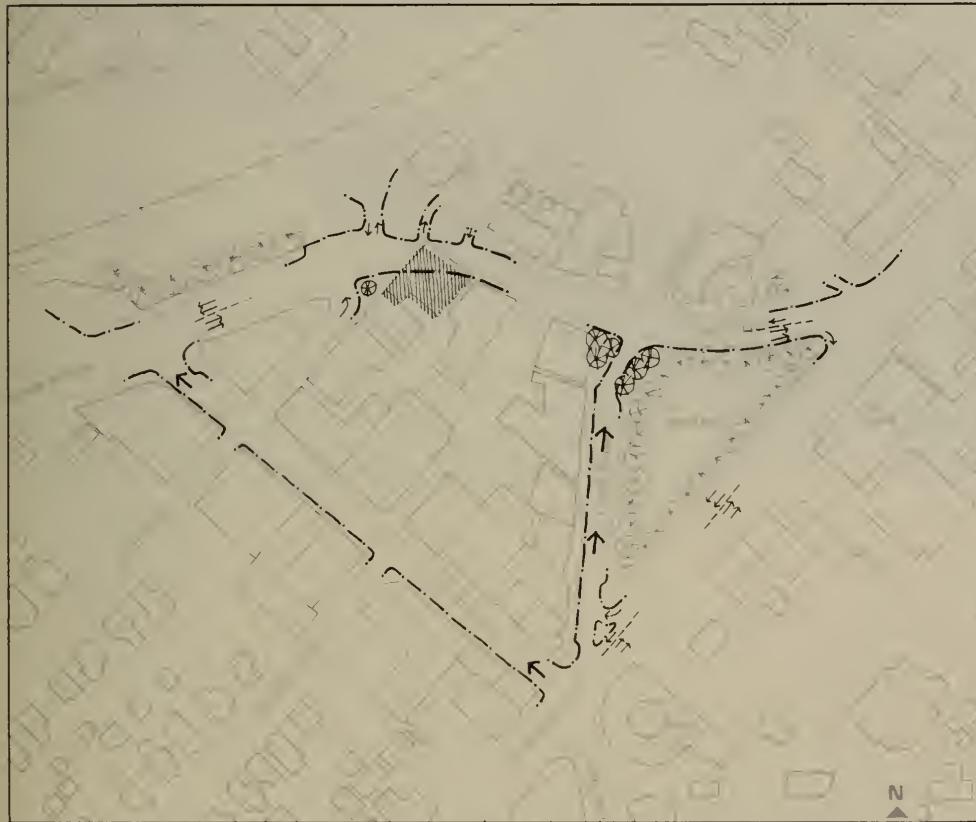
Minimal excavation of railroad embankment





### Alternative B

- Achieves better roadway geometrics
- Takes embankment and trees
- Relocates and expands parking lot



### Alternative C

- Achieves better roadway geometrics
- Takes corner building
- Leaves embankment parking in place

## Funding and Implementation

The overall solution just described should prove adequate to the goals of both traffic operations and business revitalization. Implementation is estimated to cost \$560,000 under Scheme A, \$1,040,000 under Scheme B, and \$630,000 under Scheme C.

The usual funding program for similar traffic improvements is Urban Systems, under which the state Department of Public Works plays the pivotal role in approving the project, manages the construction, and pays 30% of the cost. The Boston Redevelopment Authority funds the engineering design for Urban Systems projects in the City, and the Federal Highway Administration funds 70% of the construction costs. The BRA has engaged the engineering firm of Faye, Spofford, and Thorndike to prepare the initial design submissions for



Corinth St. will be relieved of most through traffic and buses.

whatever preferred alternative emerges from this report and the subsequent discussions among community people and City agencies.

It is essential that the complex process of environmental and design review at the state and Federal levels be expedited, and this will require nearly constant attention by the City. Urban Systems projects in Massachusetts have been known to enter construction within two years of first being proposed; they have also been known to take two or three times that long. It is particularly important that the Federal Highway Administration agree that this project is a "non-major action"--that is, that a time-consuming Environmental Impact Statement is not required. To reach this conclusion, FHWA will have to be persuaded that a

consensus for the project exists in the community. With a favorable ruling on this point, it is possible for implementation to occur during the 1981 construction season.

If it became apparent that Urban Systems support were not to be forthcoming in a timely fashion, the City would have to consider implementing the essential features of this traffic program, on a phased basis, as a Capital Budget and/or Block Grant activity.



South St. will carry two-way traffic.

## Traffic Improvements, Without Major Commercial Construction on Taft Hill

Urban Systems 1981-82

(Alternative Sources: City of Boston, Capital Budget/Block Grant)

Relocation of Island at Washington and South	\$120,000
Signalization	200,000
Poplar Street Reconstruction	120,000
Realignment of South-Belgrade Curve	
Scheme A (minor excavation of embankment)	120,000
Scheme B (relocation of retaining wall, embankment parking lot)	600,000
Scheme C (demolition of corner building)	190,000



Belgrade will carry two-way traffic.

# Parking 10

**No business district in New England believes it has enough parking, and Roslindale Square is no exception. What appears to be a big problem, however, is really the aggregation of several little problems, and the solution lies in the aggregation of little opportunities.**

**For construction to begin sooner rather than later, state and federal officials will have to be persuaded that a consensus for the project exists in the community.**

**To reach a short-term solution, merchants and employees must organize and discipline themselves to park on Taft Hill . . . This has been proposed before and it has failed. But it is still the cheapest, easiest, and most practical step that can be taken.**



No business district in New England believes it has enough parking, and Roslindale Square is no exception. On a day-to-day operational basis, there is indeed a deficiency. What appears to be a big problem, however, is really the aggregation of several little problems, and the solution lies in the aggregation of little opportunities. While the final configuration of off-street parking is difficult to predict until the supermarket issue is resolved and the design of the commuter rail station is known, there are a number of short term steps which the business community and the City can take together to relieve the problem for now.

The two most serious short term problems are related to one another:

- off-street public parking is over-concentrated in the South Street side of the

Square, which is perceived as too remote from the principal commercial area of Corinth;

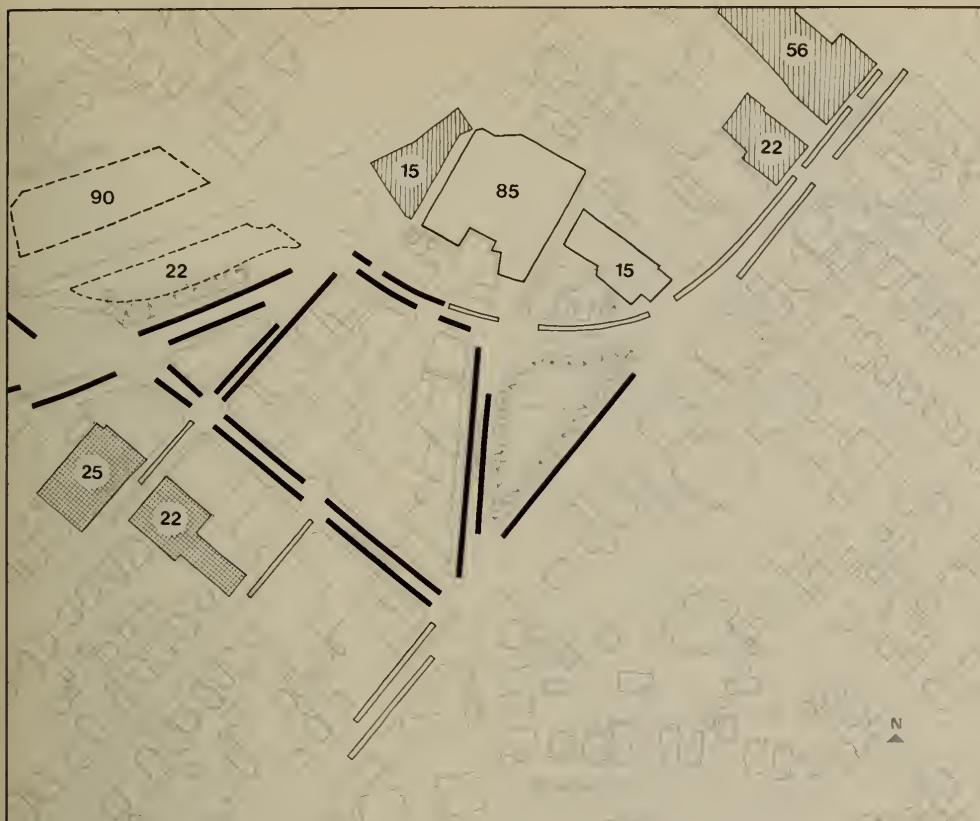
- most merchants park, and allow their employees to park, on the street, eliminating spaces for potential customers.

To reach a short term solution, merchants and employees must organize and discipline themselves to park in the South Street lots. On all but the busiest sale or festival days, the Taft Hill Terrace lot has at least 35 of its 85 spaces vacant.



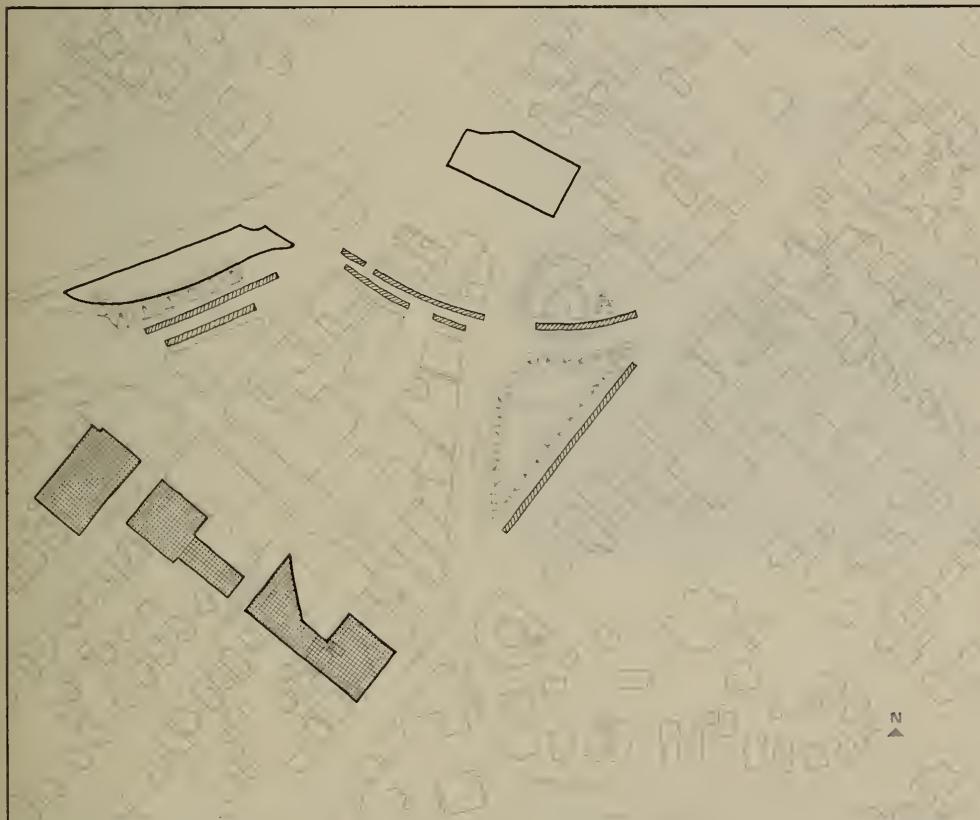
Taft Hill parking lot.

There are 32 metered spaces on Corinth Street alone, many of which would be freed for customers by such an arrangement. This has been proposed before and it has failed. But it is still the cheapest, easiest, and most practical step that can be taken. Individual businesspeople have been reluctant to join such an effort for a variety of reasons--a legitimate fear of leaving their cars in a lot they can't see, skepticism that their fellow merchants will participate, and laziness. If the desire to solve the parking problem is strong enough, the third issue will be overcome. The two others can be overcome by an organized parking management agreement, in which individual businesses join the City and the Board of Trade, RACD,



### Existing Commercial Area Parking

- Metered Parking**  
114 spaces
- Free on-street parking**  
83 spaces
- Free off-street parking**  
100 spaces
- Commuter Parking**  
112 spaces
- Bank lots on Corinth St.**  
47 spaces
- Other private lots**  
93 spaces



### Early Action Parking Improvements

- Patrolled merchant and employee parking (+ 60 spaces)**
- Shared use of bank lots in non-banking hours (+ 70 spaces)**
- On-street parking removed in creating two-way South St. and Washington St. (- 40 spaces)**

or a new CDC/LDC in a formal contract. The local organization would hire a security patrol for the Taft Hill lot. The City would enforce parking meter violations, and would be willing to shorten the meter interval from its present two hours if the merchants felt this would increase meter turn-over and total business volume.

This solution can be augmented by taking advantage of further opportunities. The MBTA commuter rail station off Belgrade Avenue will be without train service for several years, starting this fall. Of its two parking lots, the one facing the Square, although unpaved, vandal-prone, and useless in recent times, could easily be cured of these ills and converted to a convenient off-street lot of about 25 spaces. The MBTA has expressed an interest in allowing the City to make interim use of the lot for this purpose. The cooperative park-

ing framework discussed above, including the security patrol, should be extended to this lot; it represents 25 more merchant and employee cars removed from valuable curbside spaces. With the prospect of 40 on-street spaces to be removed from Washington, South, and Belgrade to accommodate the traffic improvement project as early as 1981, this extra cushion is important.

A final short term opportunity involves the two, and soon to be three, private parking lots serving the banks on Corinth Street. When the Suffolk Franklin branch joins First National and Roslindale Co-operative on this side of the Square, there will be a total of at least 70 spaces with no primary use during at least one very busy shopping time--Saturday afternoon. Within the framework of the cooperative parking agreement, these spaces should be made available for general business parking during such periods.



# Train Station

## 11

There is one futuristic element in the Roslindale Square Revitalization Strategy on which an apparent consensus exists. Roslindale people want rail service to return to the Needham Branch, and they want an attractive station which will add to the commercial appeal of the Square and its feel as a village center.

The Needham Branch will close this year for the duration of construction on the Southwest Corridor relocation of the Orange Line. Resumption of service is envisioned around 1985. While a so-called Phase I Alternatives Analysis performed for the MBTA examined both an Orange Line extension and a commuter rail improvement as options for returning service to this Branch, the MBTA made a policy decision this year to pursue the commuter rail alternative. Given a cost differential of at least \$30 million and the absence of a deep Federal commitment to further transit extensions, the rail alternative seems a realistic upper limit of what can be funded. Commuter rail does not have to mean infrequent service or invisible stations. With double-track, high-platform service, rush-hour headways can be 15 minutes, and the ride to South Station, or to an Orange Line transfer at Back Bay, fast and comfortable. The station can be a real asset to the Square, as the old station on the site was. The community and the City will have to fight for all of this.

The station platforms in both directions will be extended to accommodate six-car commuter trains. On the inbound side, an architecturally attractive covered canopy and waiting area should be constructed at a length of two cars. On the residential

side of the tracks, the parking lot on South Conway Street should be landscaped, lighted, and resurfaced.

On the commercial side, it is important that a parking facility be retained permanently to support business activity in the square. If the overall traffic improvements follow Scheme A or Scheme C, neither of which encroaches significantly on the embankment, the parking lot can remain on the site of the present underutilized lot, which the MBTA and the City should have already converted to interim parking use. If traffic Scheme B is chosen, Belgrade Avenue will be relocated into the site of the present embankment, and the parking facility relocated to encircle the Masons' block. Either way, Belgrade Avenue in the station vicinity will be carrying two-way traffic, and bus unloading areas will be created in pull-offs on both sides of the Avenue. Pedestrian access from Belgrade Avenue to track level will be provided, and the pedestrian underpass between the two sides of the track will be retained.



Current parking is poorly maintained, unattractive, and under utilized.

*Roslindale people want rail service to return to the Needham Branch, and they want an attractive station which will add to the commercial appeal of the Square and its feel as a village center.*

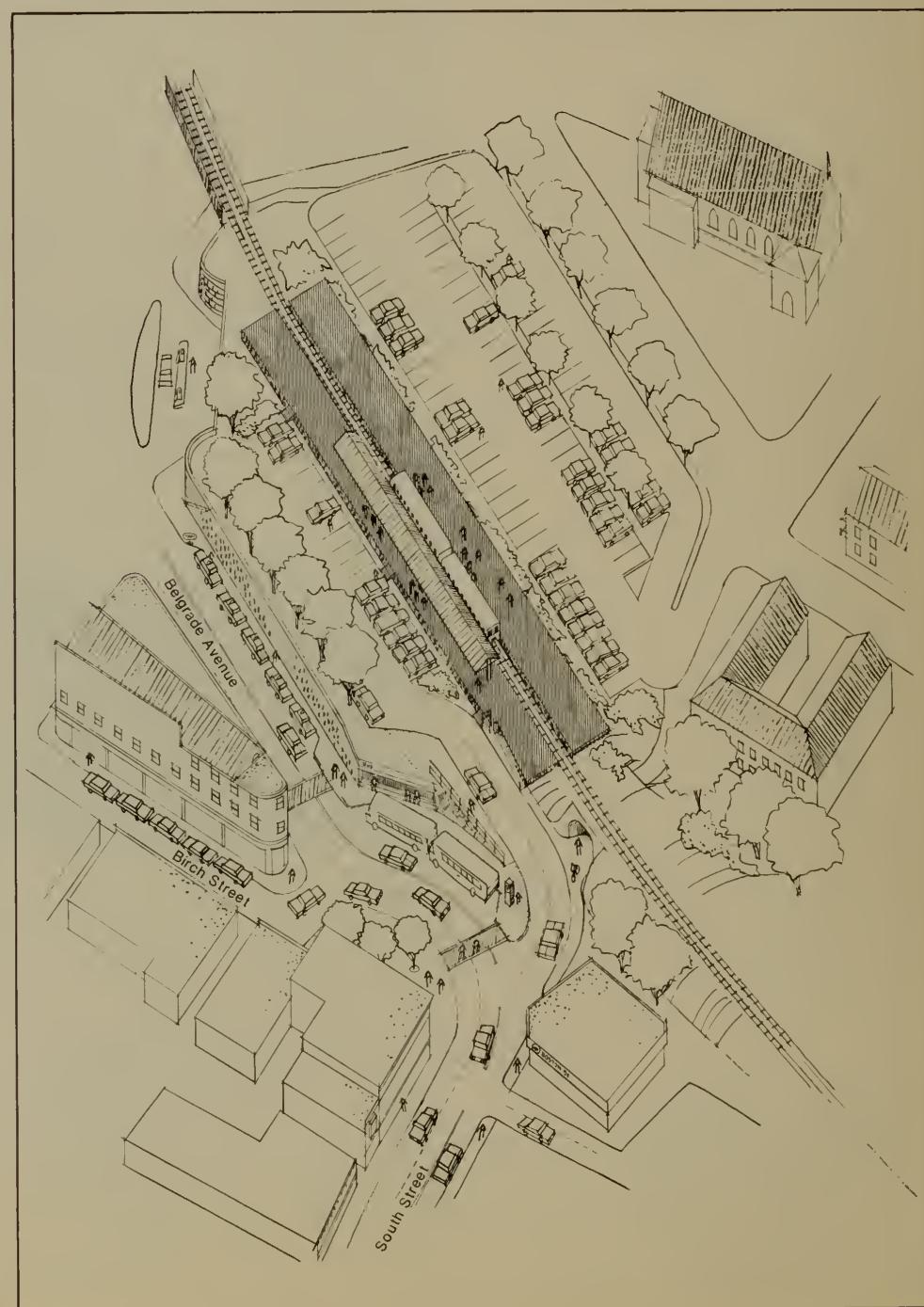
## Funding and Implementation

Creation of the interim paved parking lot on the existing embankment is estimated to cost \$25,000, and the City and MBTA should negotiate responsibility for the project. Realignment of Belgrade Avenue, including the creation of bus pull-offs and a final disposition of the parking lot location, will be part of the Urban Systems project which implements the traffic improvements plan for the Square.

The design and construction of all other station components will be part of an MBTA capital improvement project for the upgrading of the entire Needham Branch. This project could cost \$50 million, perhaps \$2 million of which would represent the Roslindale Station. Funding will be divided between the Federal Urban Mass Transit Administration (80%) and the MBTA (20%, through state transportation bond issue monies).

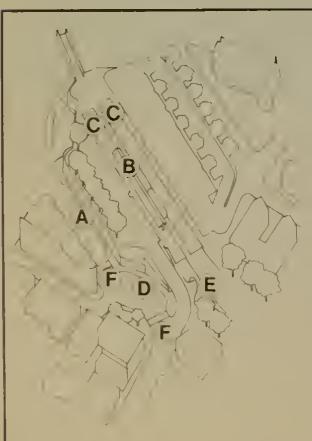


The former Roslindale Train Station.



### Train Station

- A. Taxi stand
- B. Covered waiting
- C. New platforms
- D. Bus pull-over
- E. Pedestrian underpass
- F. Pedestrian crosswalks



# Opportunities for New Commercial Development

## New Supermarket? 12

*It is important to remember that putting a new supermarket in Roslindale Square would not be a radical break with the past. Indeed, there used to be four of them. Nonetheless, there are real physical costs which a new supermarket would bring.*

*Two potential supermarket sites have been discussed: the Cohasset-Corinth-Washington block, and the area on Taft Hill which includes the present City parking lot. While there are arguments for and against both, we recommend that if the community wants a new supermarket, the Taft Hill site be considered the preferred location.*

*The supermarket industry must decide whether Roslindale Square is a viable business location, and the community must decide whether the addition would be worthwhile. Both questions should be explored with an open mind.*

If there is room in Roslindale Square for new commercial construction, a new supermarket on Taft Hill is by no means the only option. Smaller food stores could be created instead on the Corinth Street side of the Square. The Taft Hill site, and the strategies for developing it presented in the following pages, could just

as well be used for a commercial project of a different kind--offices or a retail use other than groceries. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the point of departure with regard to these or other alternatives is fixed on an exploration and attempted resolution of the supermarket issue.

Roslindale has a difficult decision to make. The Ryan, Elliott marketing survey determined that a large segment of the community avoids shopping in the Square because there is no large, modern supermarket. Ryan, Elliott's analysis, and the common sense judgment of many merchants in the Square, is that a new food market, located in the heart of Roslindale and closer to many of its residents than the markets of American Legion Highway or West Roxbury, would lure thousands of people back into the Square for their weekly grocery shopping. A spill over to existing businesses would be inevitable. Putting a new supermarket in Roslindale Square would hardly be a radical break with the past; indeed, there used to be four of them. A by-product of developing a supermarket in our preferred location would be a major improvement of parking capacity in the Square and a stimulus to the commercial exploitation of the new pedestrian way. Newly available financial incentive programs make a Roslindale Square supermarket a more realistic proposal than was the case even a year ago.

But there are drawbacks. Neither the old Stop & Shop site now occupied by Ashmont

Supply, nor the old Corey Market site soon to be redeveloped by Suffolk Franklin, is likely to be available for reuse as a supermarket. Nor would either site be large enough if it were available.

Modern supermarkets require visibility, good access, and a lot of parking. Assembly of an adequate supermarket site, and of land to accommodate the traffic and public parking spin-offs, would require the purchase and displacement of several existing homes and businesses. The City is committed to assist and finance the relocation of any property owner or tenant displaced through a publicly-supported supermarket project, even if the acquisitions are negotiated privately between the developer and the owner. Nonetheless, many people in the Square have expressed concern that these individual sacrifices outweigh the potential common benefits of a new supermarket.

A Roslindale Square site will be easier to market in the future than it has been in the past. A concrete plan

for the overall revitalization of the Square is in existence. A program to improve traffic operations with or without a supermarket will soon be in design. An entire array of financial incentive programs is now available to reduce the cost of developing a major commercial facility in a constrained, expensive urban setting.

A supermarket, although it would require difficult physical accommodations, would also offer the opportunity to resolve, in one sequence of actions, a number of traffic, parking, and land-use questions which affect the Square. Such a project would be a good candidate for an Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG), a program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which offers public financial assistance in support of key private investments in urban areas. A UDAG in Roslindale Square might have particular appeal to HUD for a variety of reasons. First, the UDAG program nationally has been used for a disproportionate number of downtown projects and HUD, as a result, is on the look-out for attractive neighborhood opportunities. Second, this project would require a relatively small UDAG grant.

Third, Massachusetts' package of financial incentives for urban revitalization have attracted nation-wide attention; a supermarket in Roslindale Square would enable HUD to demonstrate the effectiveness of the UDAG program when combined with such tools as CARD financing and state assistance to Community Development Corporations.

Two potential supermarket sites have been discussed: the Cohasset-Corinth-Washington block, and the area on Taft Hill which includes the present City parking lot. While there are arguments for and against both, we recommend that if the community wants a new supermarket, the Taft Hill site be considered the preferred location.

There are several reasons:

- any attempt to assemble the Corinth Street site for a supermarket will probably conflict with the active plans of the Suffolk Franklin Bank to redevelop the Corey Market site;
- a supermarket on the Corinth Street site will profoundly reinforce the concentration of commercial activity on this side of the Square. The traffic capacity of Corinth Street itself will be strained, and the parking deficiency which already affects that part of the business district will be worsened;
- use of the new Taft Court pedestrian way, and its eventual success in stimulating new commercial activities in the central block, will be more difficult to promote if all significant retail activity is overloaded at one end.

A supermarket on the Taft Hill site would avoid all of these drawbacks. It would create a double-anchored business district, with the cluster of small businesses on the Corinth Street side and the market on the South Street side. Use of the pedestrian way would be a natural occurrence. Furthermore, when the supermarket's own parking lot displaces the existing City lot, that facility could, in turn, be relocated to the Washington

Street side of the Cohasset-Corinth-Washington block. A landscaped lot on this new location need not require the demolition of the Spa building on the corner or of any homes. The merchants in the Corinth Street area would have a new off-street lot where they need it most.

A supermarket on the Taft Hill site would require the acquisition of the three commercial buildings on the north side of South Street, between Taft Hill Terrace and the Boston Five Cent Savings Bank driveway. Once these acquisitions were made, a strip of land wide enough to add a fourth lane to South Street would be turned over to the City for that purpose. It is thus established at the outset that these three buildings would not be sacrificed for a widening of South Street unless the major commercial development which would make that widening necessary were assured. The three commercial buildings between Taft Hill Terrace and Washington Street would never be sacrificed; an extra lane on this portion of South Street could be created by narrowing the sidewalk alongside Adams Park.

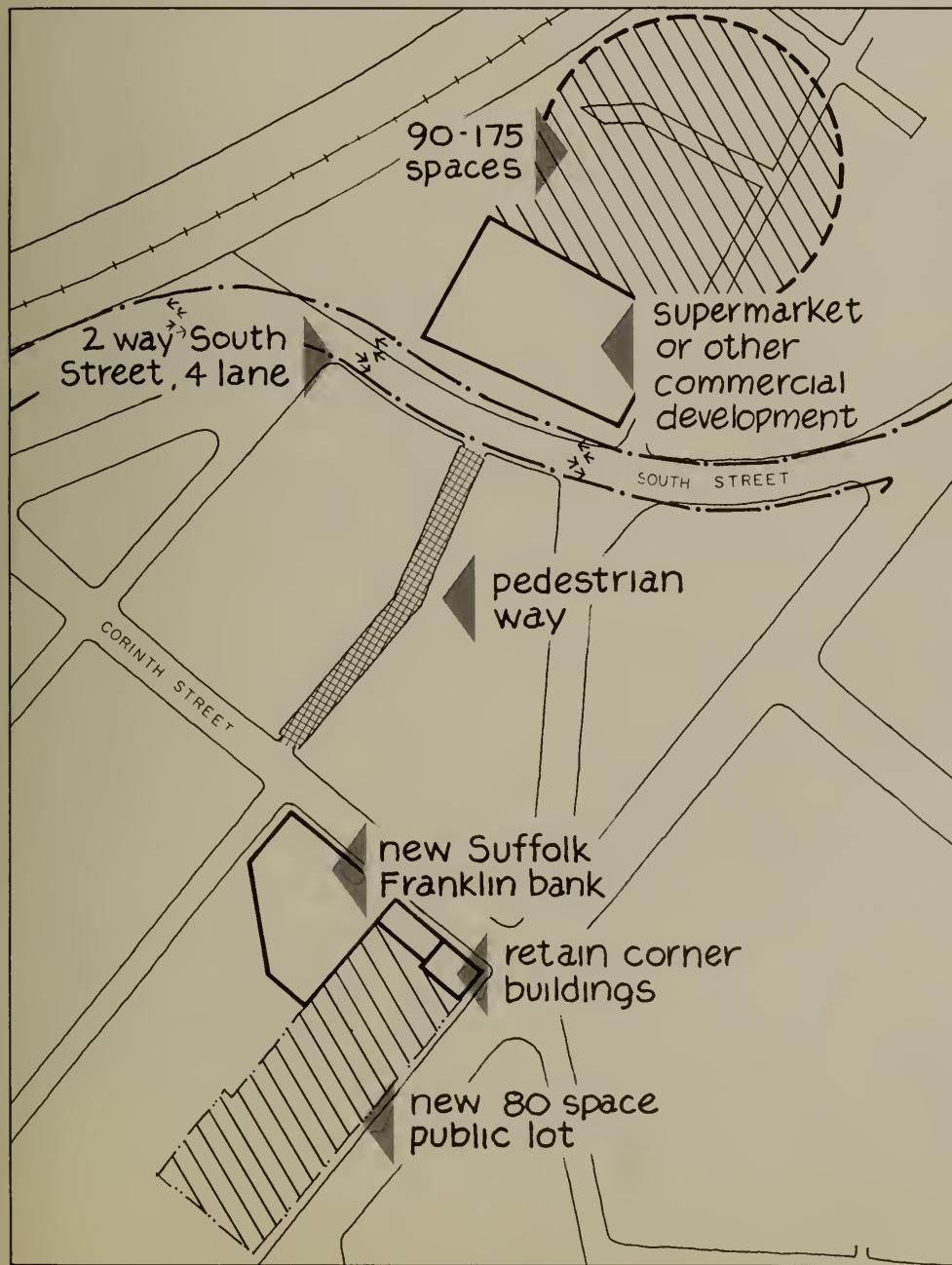
Even if the community, a developer, and the City agreed to pursue a supermarket sooner rather than later, the traffic improvements could be phased in this same sequence. The overall improvements discussed earlier in this report would be implemented first; the addition of a fourth lane on South Street would occur last, during the construction of the market.

A Taft Hill supermarket could be developed on any of

three scales: a national or regional chain outlet, with a store of approximately 30,000 square feet; an intermediate-sized independent store of 15-20,000 square feet; or, conceivably, a two-story building housing both an intermediate-sized food market and an additional commercial activity. The number of parking spaces required to support the development, and the number of homes the developer would seek to purchase, would vary according-

ly. The store should be located at the front of the parcel, where it would reinforce the line of South Street; a landscaped, well-lighted parking lot would buffer the building from the residences further back on Taft Hill Terrace.

If none of these three alternatives can be packaged on the Taft Hill site, attention might turn to the development of a series of smaller, more specialized food stores on the commercial portion of the Cohasset-Corinth-Washington block where our drawing shows the relocated public parking lot. The Spa building might prove an attractive anchor to such a development, and there would still be room for some new off-street parking.



Components of a potential supermarket plan.

## Funding and Implementation

UDAG's are awarded every quarter-year on the basis of a nationally competitive application process. The City must be the applicant, but the funds can be spent through a variety of municipal and non-profit agencies.

The amount of a UDAG grant depends directly on the dollar value of the related private investment, which must be firmly committed at the time of the award. The ratio of private to UDAG dollars should be at least 3-1. While a supermarket might cost about \$1.5 million, other private investments contemplated at the time the UDAG is being planned could be tied to new public improvements, increasing the amount of the UDAG grant proportionately.

The development of a new supermarket on Taft Hill would require a series of public and private actions. On the public side, the following improvements would be required:

- the addition of a fourth lane on South Street;
- the creation of a relocated public parking lot on Washington Street near Corinth;
- the completion of the public portions of the Taft Court pedestrian way.

## Public Improvements Associated with a New Supermarket

Item	Estimated Cost	Alternative Funding Sources
Fourth Lane on South Street	\$ 60,000	UDAG, or second-phase Urban Systems, or City capital budget/block grant
Replacement Parking Lot on Washington St.	260,000	UDAG, or Urban Systems replacement parking, or proposed state bond issue for CARD parking facilities
Public Phase of Pedestrian Way	200,000	UDAG, or City Capital Budget/Block Grant

These could be funded either wholly or in part with UDAG monies, depending on the eventual size of the grant and the availability of alternative funding sources. The addition of the extra lane on South Street could be a relatively inexpensive City action if overall traffic improvement Scheme B or C had already been implemented, since the South-Belgrade corner would now be sufficiently wide to accommodate the new lane. If not, a state-Federal Urban Systems project would be required to implement one of those schemes concurrently with the development of the supermarket.

The new public parking lot could be funded in part through a provision of the Urban Systems program under which on-street spaces eliminated as part of a traffic improvement program can be replaced off-street with state and Federal highway funds. Since the overall traffic improvements proposed for the Square would remove up to 40 on-street spaces, half the cost of the new lot could be financed in this

fashion. Also, state legislation has been filed to create a state bond issue to be used for reimbursing municipalities which build off-street parking facilities in CARD districts; if this bill passes, Roslindale Square would certainly be eligible.

The permanent public components of the pedestrian way could be either a City Capital Budget project or a UDAG item, depending on the timing of the supermarket development.

The private investment in a new supermarket would consist of land acquisitions for the building and parking lot, and construction of both facilities. Compared to an open suburban location, this will be an expensive proposition. Development costs are reflected in the annual mortgage and property tax costs of the project, which ultimately determine how large a weekly sales volume the store must attract to be profitable.

State and local financial incentives can be combined effectively to "write down" the development costs. With CARD revenue bond financing, the interest rate on the mortgage can be reduced by 2 to 4 percentage points. If a chain which pays corporate excise taxes in Massachusetts were involved, the CARD designation could also trigger the Urban Job Incentive Program provisions which balance the City's high property taxes by reducing state taxes. A Roslindale Community/Local Development Corporation could be the co-sponsor and landlord of the development, attracting a state equity contribution from CDFC. The City could negotiate a low acquisition price for the existing Taft Hill parking lot, and could well consider granting a 121A tax agreement to the market developer. Finally, if it were necessary, a portion of the UDAG grant could be channeled by the city to the Community/Local Development Corporation to be loaned to the developer; the funds, as they were paid back, would be reused for other revitalization projects in the Square.

Two boxes appear in this section. One summarizes alternative funding sources for the public improvements associated with the supermarket development. The other illustrates how a combination of state and local financial incentives could reduce the private development costs which would be passed on to a supermarket operator.

This discussion does not presuppose that there will be

a new supermarket in the Square. Rather, it suggests where such a facility could be built, how it could be financed, and what changes it would bring. The supermarket industry must decide whether Roslindale Square is a viable business location, and the community must decide whether the addition would be worthwhile. Both questions should be explored with an open mind.

## Financial Incentives for a Supermarket or Other New Commercial Development

HYPOTHETICAL PROJECT: 30,000 square foot market with 120 parking spaces

Site Assembly (assuming \$10 per square foot for commercial and residential parcels, \$5 per square foot for unbuilt parcels)	\$630,000
Construction of Building (assuming \$30 per square foot)	900,000
Construction of Parking Lot	65,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,600,000</b>

### IF CONVENTIONALLY FINANCED:

Development costs = \$52/SF at estimated capitalization rate of 13.5% per annum

Tenant occupancy costs = 
$$\frac{\$7/SF \text{ rent}}{\$5/SF \text{ taxes}} + \frac{\$5/SF \text{ taxes}}{\$12/SF \text{ total}}$$

Required weekly sales volume if occupancy costs are 2% of sales = \$300,000

### IF ASSISTED BY CARD REVENUE BOND FINANCING, \$200,000 IN CDFC EQUITY, AND A 121A TAX AGREEMENT AT 30% OF RENT:

Development Costs = \$45/SF at estimated capitalization rate of 9.8% per annum

Tenant Occupancy Costs = 
$$\frac{\$4.40/SF \text{ rent}}{\$1.30/SF \text{ taxes}} + \frac{\$1.30/SF \text{ taxes}}{\$5.70/SF \text{ total}}$$

Required weekly sales volume = \$165,000.

Further reductions possible through loan of UDAG funds, reduced acquisition price on city parking lot.

# Conclusion

If the people of Roslindale maintain and nurture the consensus which exists in support of most of the proposals in this Revitalization Strategy, the Square can be a very exciting place one year from today. The pedestrian way in the central business block can be open and functioning, with work underway to complete the public portions of the facility. The beautification of Corinth Street can be in progress, with many private businesses actively improving their storefronts on Corinth and other streets. Parking can be less of a problem than it is today, and the organized effort to manage the Square's

parking resources efficiently can be but one of the tasks on the agenda of a Community/Local Development Corporation with neighborhood-wide membership, elected officers, and a firm grip on the array of financial programs needed to foster new private investment.

Final engineering can be underway on a traffic improvement program which promises better access, easier circulation and a more beautiful Poplar Street, without wholesale demolition. The conversion of Roslindale High School to elderly housing can be approaching construction. A new bank can be in place where the Corey Market shell now calls attention to the Square's problems, and serious discussions about the

full utilization of other key buildings can be underway. With the traffic design and the critical phase of the Needham Branch rail study in progress, Roslindale can help form a clearer image of the new train station and parking facilities at the western entry to the Square.

In short, next fall can see not only progress on a series of individual improvements, but momentum toward an agreed-upon vision of Roslindale Square as a revitalized village center. While government and business will have crucial roles to play, that momentum must draw its origins and its sustenance from the people of Roslindale.

## Credits:

### Harrington, Keefe, & Schork:

Frank T. Keefe  
Alden S. Raine  
F. Tenney Lantz  
Brian Tracy

### Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill:

Peter Hopkinson  
Karen Alschuler  
Craig Walton

### City of Boston:

#### Boston Redevelopment Authority:

Brian Fallon, Deputy Director  
Ronald Nayler, Director, Neighborhood Planning  
Cynthia Wall  
Sandra Swaile  
Matthew Curry  
Richard McAllister

#### Office of Public Service:

William Holland, Director  
Daniel Toomey  
Evelyn Campbell

#### Office of Program Development:

Paul Horn  
Emanuel Berk  
Carolyn Mannix

### Neighborhood Business District Program:

Joseph Petipas  
Traffic and Parking Department:  
Philip Caruso

### Graphic Design:

Terri Barel Eisenberg,  
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

### Photographs:

Ellen Freda, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (cover, 2 left, 3 bottom, 7 right, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18 (top right), 20, 26, 27, 28 left, 29, 31, 32, 38 left, 41)  
Joseph Henefield (2 right, 3 top, 9 top left, 28 right, 30)  
Sandra Swaile, Boston Redevelopment Authority (18 bottom left, 26 right middle, 36, 37, 38 right, 40)  
Richard Bonney (historical photographs)

### Storefront Drawings:

Mark Favermann  
Robert Karn  
Gail Witney  
Favermann Associates under contract with the Mayor's Neighborhood Business District Program, Richard Hogan, Director



